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HER EVIL GENIUS; OR, DRIFTING ON THE TIDE.

BY HARRIET IRVING,

AUTHOR OF "A MAN'S SACRIFICE," "FLEEING FROM LOVE," ETC., ETC., ETC.



ABOVE ALL, SHE WAS NOW AT NEWPORT.

Her Evil Genius:

OR,

DRIFTING ON THE TIDE.

BY HARRIET IRVING,
AUTHOR OF "A MAN'S SACRIFICE," "PARTED
BY TREACHERY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. RESCUED.

"CAN you ever be angry? Can you ever be cruel?" was the apostrophe of a lovely girl of some sixteen summers, as she watched the wavelets roll lazily over the golden sands at her feet.

She was a solitary figure in the landscape, but felt no sense of loneliness, her happy buoyant nature supplying any want of companionship. Her little figure flitted about here and there, in search of the petty but much-prized treasures of happy childhood.

Pretty pebbles, delicate shells and sea moss, all were eagerly gathered, until her shapely delicate hands were quite full.

Some of the moss she stuck in the ribbon of her coarse straw hat that confined her beautiful head and golden tresses. The wanton breeze, not content with fluttering the ribbon in her face, blew her skirt aside, disclosing a pair of very pretty ankles and rosy feet of sea-shell hue.

"What shall I do?" she murmured.

The saucy waves, as if in reply, made a little rush and curled invitingly round her feet.

Raising her skirts, she waded into the tiny wavelets leaping and frisking about her, with the sunlight kissing their foam-flecked crests.

She clutched gleefully at floating weeds, and looked lovingly at the little live shells which moved here and there, like fairy barques.

She was in paradise, and forgot that there was such a thing as a tide, treacherous and cruel in its insidious advances.

She saw her own image reflected in the limpid pools, which were as still as if they were sheets of pure Venetian glass.

The inviting waters tempted her away from the shore, quite unconscious of lurking peril.

Looking back, she saw with alarm that she was already separated from the shore by the swiftly rising but silent waters, which were surely, but quietly, preparing for her a shroud of death.

"Oh, I shall be drowned!" she exclaimed, with a piercing cry.

That moment was full of intense agony, as she struggled with the waves. She thought of all those that were near and dear to her, and wondered in her childlike way if she would meet them hereafter, and whether they would find her drowned body after the sea had done its work.

At this juncture a boat was fast approaching the spot where the girl was battling for her life.

It contained two young men, one evidently educated and high-bred, the other of humbler origin.

They set their teeth hard together and pulled till the veins in their arms stood out like whipcord.

A few more strokes and they were close to her—not a minute too soon, for the struggling girl began to sink, limp and almost lifeless.

With reckless bravery one of the twain leaped into the gurgling waters and made for the drowning girl.

He caught the flimsy texture of her dress in his grasp, only to have it come with him.

With one desperate effort the lad clutched her by the arm; then his hand caught in the meshes of her hair, and he lifted her face above the water.

He tried to swim to the boat, but the burden was too great for him and, faint and exhausted, he, too, was sinking.

To let go his hold and save himself would have been easy enough, but Basil Maitland was

no coward. He possessed an undaunted spirit of bravery, and determined, if he could not save her, to die with her.

Meanwhile Basil's companion, Bob Hartford, had not been idle, and with an almost superhuman effort grasped hold of his friend by the collar of his coat and raised them both to the surface.

Disengaging one hand, Basil clutched wildly at the side of the boat, and with the assistance of Bob managed to save both himself and his insensible burden.

"Master Basil, has your life been risked in vain? Does she still live?"

"Yes, Bob, I think her heart is still beating; if you will—"

"Heavens! it's my sister Emily!" exclaimed Bob in an agitated tone.

"Then I am doubly repaid for my ducking."

Bending anxiously over her, they tried all the remedies in their power to restore her to consciousness.

"Her little breast is warm at last," exclaimed Bob, "and her heart is beating regularly."

"Thank God!" he continued, as he clasped Basil's hand.

She slowly opened her eyes, and looking up, recognized Bob.

"Oh, Bob," she exclaimed in a feeble tone, "what has happened? Where am I?"

"In the Water Witch, rowing home to dad, who will be mightily put out at our long absence."

In a few minutes Bob had brought the boat to shore, where the fishermen and their wives were anxiously waiting to receive them, having seen the danger from the beach, and among them were old Jasper Hartford and his wife.

Directly the boat touched the shore, old Hartford sprung in, exclaiming, "Oh, my bonnie lassie! has the spark of life gone out of yer?"

"No, father, she lives, thanks to Master Basil," said Bob.

The old man quickly caught her in his strong arms, and stepping from the boat to the shore, made rapid strides for his home, followed by his anxious wife and their friends.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST DAWN OF LOVE.

A WEEK has passed since the events recorded in the previous chapter, bringing with it restored health and strength to our heroine.

She sat at the open window drinking in the fresh, pure breeze which came laden with ozone from the sea, and the perfume of roses and honeysuckles from the land.

There was a yearning, expectant look on her face, and her eyes strayed toward the beach, as if she were watching for some one she loved.

Presently her eyes lighted up with animation and delight as Basil Maitland came into sight.

In another minute he was in the cottage, holding her hand in his, and congratulating her upon her rapid recovery.

There was such a ring of loving tenderness in his voice that her eyes drooped beneath his earnest gaze, and her face and neck became suffused with warm blushes.

She murmured her thanks when he said: "Surely you will not miss such a beautiful evening as this, especially as it is your last one here for some time to come?"

He took her hand, and offering her hat, led her down to the beach, along which they wandered for some time in blissful silence, as if afraid to break the sweet spell indicated by the tender grasp of his hand.

She looked up timidly in his face and said, in a sweet, gentle voice, "Do not think me ungrateful for the great service you rendered me in saving my life; I have longed for this opportunity to express my deep gratitude. May I not always look upon you as a friend?"

"Yes," he hastened to reply; "I am that already. May I not hope to some day call you by a dearer name than friend?"

Looking up artlessly, she said, with charming simplicity, "Bob is my brother—am I to have another?"

He could not repress a smile at her innocence.

"No, my dear Emily, something nearer and dearer still. You tell me you are grateful for my having saved your life; now, in return, I crave your love, without which my life would be valueless. Promise, dearest one, that you will be mine."

"If to have you always in my thoughts is love, I have already bestowed the gift you ask."

A flush of joy illumined his face as his hand tenderly encircled her waist, and drawing her toward him, he gave her love's first kiss.

They were steeped in a very atmosphere of bliss. The soft breezes seemed laden with it, and the wavelets seemed to break with a tender hush on the pebbly shore, while, rising heavenward, a lark pealed forth its even-song, as if in sympathy with two loving hearts.

Suddenly the bell of the village church struck the hour, and they were awakened from love's first dream.

Disengaging herself from his embraces, Emily said, "Oh, Mr. Maitland, my mother will miss me, and will be anxious to know what has become of me. Let me go!"

"No, my darling, not until you have promised to call me Basil. Let me hear it from your lips now!"

Looking up lovingly into his face, she softly murmured, "Basil."

"My own darling!" he exclaimed, as he again caught her to his breast, raining passionate kisses upon her brow and lips, "you have, indeed, made me happy!"

The sun was sinking in the west as the lovers retraced their steps leisurely toward the cottage, and all nature seemed peaceful and hushed.

The sea appeared to be a rolling mass of gold, dotted here and there by the little fishing-smacks returning home, laden with the produce of the day's labor.

As the lovers sauntered along, exchanging loving words and plighting their troth, the sun gradually sunk to rest; the stars began to peep and twinkle, and the moon shed its brilliant silvery light upon all around. Indeed, so suddenly had the scene changed, that it seemed as if it had been wrought by fairy hands.

The lovers' attention was suddenly arrested by a voice shouting to them. Turning to discover the direction whence it came, they saw Bob running toward them at full speed.

He took off his cap as he approached.

"Good-evening to you, sir; I thought it was you from the distance. But how well you look, Emily, dear! Why, you've got the roses back again on your cheeks now, and no mistake! Has Mr. Basil been telling you some more of his funny stories?"

The pair looked very guilty, and Bob gave his usual whistle, and murmured:

"Oh, I see how the land lies; but I beg yer pardon, Mr. Basil, I wouldn't have interrupted yer for the world, but I thought that you and Emily would like to see how lucky we have been to-day. The smack is weighted down with fish; father and me scarce knew how to bring it to land."

"Nothing could afford me greater pleasure. Come along."

A few minutes' walk brought them to where the smack was being unloaded.

Old Jasper looked with intense delight when he saw Emily and young Maitland approach, for right proud was he of his day's work; besides, Basil was a great favorite of his.

When the fish had all been landed, Bob and old Jasper started off toward home with their load, Emily and Basil following.

The time had now arrived when the lovers must part, and the "good-by" he said.

Taking her hand in his, he said:

"You will not forget me, darling, will you, though two years must pass before we can hope to meet again. I go to Harvard to finish my studies, and you to school to finish yours. Oh, that the two years had passed, and that

this was our meeting, instead of our parting!"

She took his hand tenderly, and said softly, as she looked into his eyes:

"As you have saved my life, I lay it at your feet forever!"

Catching his hand suddenly, she rained passionate kisses on it, and was gone.

CHAPTER III.

NEW FRIENDSHIPS.

MRS. HARTFORD was busy all that night preparing for her darling's departure, with many tears and a heavy heartache.

In the morning the old village hack rolled up to the door, and the parting between Emily and those she loved took place.

"Don't forget us, darling," said the motherly creature, with a gush of tears—"don't forget them that you leave behind, and who will always pray for you day and night!"

Emily wound her arms around her neck, and cried as if her heart was breaking.

Another good-by hug, and Jasper lifted Emily into the vehicle; then, jumping in himself, he cracked his whip, coughed down his sobs, and drove off.

Emily waved her handkerchief to her adopted mother, until a turn in the road hid her from view.

How tender were the recollections of the home she was leaving, perhaps forever, and how her heart went out with her yearning love and sympathy to that lone woman who had supplied a parent's place to her, and had given her everything a mother could give, unsparingly and without stint!

It was late in the day when they reached Montague House, and the melancholy which hedged the place almost made Emily feel sad and homesick; and this feeling was heightened not a little when a crowd of girls, walking about the grounds and lawn, giggled and pointed at her as she passed.

"She's got boy's shoes on!" cried one of the group.

"And look at her funny bonnet!"

She looked up into Bob's face, and noted how red it had grown, and how his eyes glared at the insult.

Forgetting her own pain, she slipped her hand into Bob's, and said, quietly, "Don't mind! I don't care for them a bit!"

She did care, however; and that night she sat at her little window, and thought of her dear old home, where no person ever thought of laughing at her style of dress or thick leather shoes.

The next morning, Emily was examined by the lady principal and assigned a place in one of the new classes.

Most of the girls treated the stranger coldly, and when playtime came, they left her standing on the lawn, all alone and neglected.

"Why don't you join us?"

The voice was sweet and kind, and Emily looked up into Muriel Barnett's face.

"Because—" she said, dropping her eyes.

"Because what?"

"They don't like me, and they ridicule my dress."

There was something very bitter in Emily's voice as she said this, and Muriel noticed it at once.

"And you are angry, are you?"

There was no answer. Then Muriel spoke again.

"Will you accompany me for a walk?"

"Yes, gladly."

They strolled along the lawn until they were almost out of sight of the other girls.

Then Muriel, who was a dark, beautiful girl of sixteen, said: "My name is Muriel Barnett. My parents live in New York. Where do yours live?"

"In Lynemouth," was the reply. "My name is Emily Duncan, and my father's name is Jasper Hartford."

"Your father's name is Hartford and yours is Duncan!" exclaimed Muriel. "Why, how do you make that out?"

"He is not my real father."

"Not your real father?"

"No."

"Then who is?"

"I don't know. I was left by my mother at the cottage of these good people when I was a baby."

Muriel opened her large, lustrous black eyes wide, and lifted her jeweled hands in wonder.

"And you never have seen your father or mother?"

"No, I never did."

"Then you have no home?"

"Oh, yes; I have a darling home, and they have all been too good to me!" said Emily.

"Besides, there is Basil."

"How old is he?"

"I don't know."

"Do you think I should like Basil?"

"I am sure you would," was the prompt reply.

"Perhaps, when he comes to see you, I will fall in love with him, and make him fall in love with me."

Muriel laughed as she said this, showing her even teeth of pearl, and nudged Emily with her elbow playfully.

Emily looked so confused that Muriel divined what was passing in her mind, and smilingly—for Muriel was all smiles and caresses—said: "You are jealous now. You needn't blush, and try to scorch the grass with your crimson face. I see it all; but come, let us be friends. I have a lover, too—a handsome, nice fellow. I get letters from him every week or two. He's abroad now."

"Across the sea?" asked Emily, with some interest.

"Yes, across the sea. He's coming home soon, though, and when he does, I'm going to have a long vacation."

"What's his name?" asked Emily.

"Well, it's not a very aristocratic name," replied Muriel. "It's Harry Sinclair. He's my cousin, and papa says I am going to be his wife in two more years."

Emily congratulated her new friend in her frank way, and then listened with growing interest to Muriel's glowing description of her splendid home.

After that day, the two girls became fast friends, talking and chatting about themselves, their homes, and their lovers, which afforded a never-ending source of interest to them.

Two days before the summer vacation Muriel received a letter from her father, saying that her mother and himself would be at Montague House on the following day to take her home.

Muriel promptly communicated the glad intelligence to Emily, and they arranged that they should meet their visitors at the lodge gate, which they did.

Colonel Barnett was a tall, silver-haired, aristocratic-looking man, with large blue eyes and military bearing. He was possibly forty, but looked older; while his wife was a dark beauty, five years his junior.

They folded their only child in their arms and kissed her tenderly. Mrs. Barnett asked Muriel who her companion was, and the latter replied: "This is Emily, my friend, and favorite among all the girls."

"What did you say her name is?"

And Mrs. Barnett put the tips of her delicate gloved hand on Emily's head as she spoke.

"Emily Duncan," was the reply.

Colonel Barnett was leisurely surveying the landscape through his glasses when that name sounded in his ears; but all at once he became deadly pale.

He darted a quick, sharp glance at Emily, who was now talking to his stately wife, and then said, in a voice which he could scarcely keep from trembling: "My child, where is your mother? Where do you live?"

"At Lynemouth," Emily answered. "She will be here to-morrow."

"Your mother will be here to-morrow!" he gasped. "Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, sir; Mr. Hartford and my brother Bob are coming, too."

Colonel Barnett seemed perplexed at her reply, and muttered to himself: "There is some strange fatality in this, and a mystery which I must clear up. Mine shall be the task."

The colonel passed his hand lovingly over Emily's golden head and looked down into the clear blue depths of her eyes, and imprinted a fatherly kiss on her white forehead, saying to himself, "How like her mother!"

A tender light came into his face as he gazed, and the strong man trembled like an aspen.

"You are a dear girl, Emily Duncan"—he dwelt lovingly upon the name—"and you must come and see us sometimes. Will you give us that pleasure?"

"I shall be very happy to come wherever my friend Muriel is; and I do so much desire to see New York, for I have never seen any place but Lynemouth and this in my life. But I fear I shall not be able to come this year, as my parents require me home."

Muriel volunteered the story of Emily's youth as the party walked up to the school, and Mrs. Barnett said at the conclusion, "What a great pity so lovely a girl should have been brought up among such a class as these fisher people!"

"But, mamma, you must admit that my friend Emily is innately a lady in every sense; in fact, our principal acknowledges that herself."

"My dear Muriel, I am not detracting from your friend's virtues. I believe her to be good, true, and lovable, and I am only too gratified to find my Muriel has made such a dear little friend."

By this time they had reached the reception-room of Montague House, where Madame Dupre received them with a smiling welcome as she came forward to greet her patrons.

Old Jasper was there, feeling quite at his ease, although he was the cynosure of all eyes, his face so rugged and weather-beaten, and his dress anything but in the fashion, his new suit ill-fitting and of the roughest materials.

The young ladies and visitors noticed all this. Some smiled, some stared, and some wondered where those odd looking people came from and what business had brought them to Montague House.

Bob's quick eye caught the full import of this giggling and wonderment, and it wounded his sensitive nature to such an extent that he could bear it no longer, so he strolled quickly toward the town, to walk off the hard feelings their insulting conduct had caused him.

When he returned he met Emily and his parents on the lawn.

"Where did you run off to, Bob?" asked Emily. "We have been looking everywhere for you."

"Well, to tell the truth, Emily, I couldn't bear the gibes and sneers of those people. It might be fun for them, but it was pain to me, and so I went for a walk."

"Made game of you! What on earth should they do that for?" exclaimed Jasper, coming on the scene at this juncture.

Emily looked lovingly at Bob and his new suit.

"Don't mind them, dear brother. They treated me in just the same fashion when I came here first. When they know you their verdict will be different, I'm sure."

"But I can't help minding them," said Bob. "I can not make out why rich people should sneer at their poorer brothers and sisters."

Thereupon Muriel and her parents joined the party.

Introductions were exchanged, and Muriel shook Bob's hand with great warmth.

The mere touch of her hand sent an electrical thrill of ecstasy through his frame—a sensation altogether as unexpected as it was novel, and one which was quite unaccountable.

He raised his eyes with bashful timidity to her lovely face and caught the earnest expression of her beautiful dark eyes, which seemed to question his innermost self and raised emo-

tions to which he had hitherto been a stranger.

To him she appeared some divinity, a queen to be worshiped and adored; and as the thought of her superiority flashed upon him, he let her hand fall and bowed his head in acknowledgment of his own inferiority.

But although these thoughts coursed swiftly through his brain, they were followed by yet another which braced him in every nerve and made him stand with head erect, a brave man once more, sturdy of limb and heart, ready to battle with fate, and to win honorably, but resolutely, the love of the girl who stood before him.

The time had now arrived for the adieux to be finally spoken. Muriel kissed Emily affectionately; bade good-by to Bob and the old people; then the carriage drove off, and lingering glances followed her until she was out of sight.

Now that her friend was gone, Emily was only too glad to return to her old home once more, although she could not but regret leaving a spot hallowed to her by the memory of a tender friendship, the first of her young life contracted with a girl of her own age.

She was loved by Basil, and loved him in return, but hitherto she had wanted a truly sympathetic heart, young and fresh as was her own, into which to pour unreservedly the joys, sorrows, aspirations and hopes of a life just budding into womanhood.

Before home was reached a change had come over Emily—an indefinable dread, amounting to a positive apprehension of coming trouble, but from what quarter, or to whom it would relate, she had not the remotest idea.

She was a brave girl, with a nerve strong as iron, and endeavored to battle bravely against this haunting feeling of dread.

But despite her every effort it clung around her like the folds of a heavy garment, weighing down her spirits and making her feel wretched; so much so, in fact, that she had no heart to admire the beautiful scenery which lay along the route.

She gave a cry of delight when the ocean burst upon her view, while a tender light came into her eyes as they rested on the spot where her Basil had rescued her from death and given her back to life and love.

Just as they entered the gate a boy handed Bob a telegram, which he opened and read with a blanched face and averted eyes.

"Bob," she whispered, "is it bad news? Does it concern Basil?"

His heart was too full for utterance; her emotion so great that she nearly fainted.

CHAPTER IV.

SAD NEWS.

A JULY sun is setting and red in the neighborhood of Gramercy Park.

The grounds are wrapped in somber shadows, but on each of the windows of the mansion of Colonel Barnett facing the park are reflected crimson and gold fantasies.

Muriel is sitting at a great oak table in her father's library, with her favorite dog Lorie at her feet, evidently in deep thought.

She was thinking of her school-fellow, Emily Duncan, and of the strange story she had told her; how she had been deserted by her mother when quite an infant; also of Bob Hartford, who had made a favorable impression upon her, and for whom she had conceived a great liking.

Her reverie was interrupted by a servant, who handed her a letter edged with black.

Recognizing the writing to be that of Emily, she opened it with trembling haste.

The contents ran thus:

"MY DEAREST MURIEL:—

"What must you think of my long silence and seeming neglect? I have passed through such a sea of trouble that that must plead my excuse.

"My dear foster-mother has been taken from us after a short and sharp illness. We are all distracted with grief.

"But this has not been my only trouble. My darling Basil has been fighting with a severe attack of typhoid fever, and Bob has been nursing him through

it all. Owing to this, poor dear Bob did not see the last of our dear mother, for fear of bringing home the infection.

"Dear Muriel, you will rejoice with me, I know, to hear that my Basil is now convalescent, and Bob is expected home every hour.

"Give my kindest regards to your mamma and papa. With fondest love, believe me

"Your ever loving,
"EMILY."

Muriel's eyes filled with tears as she finished reading her friend's letter.

She immediately proceeded to find her father, who, as usual, was engaged in attending to his pets—the azaleas and camellias in the conservatory.

"Well, little Sunbeam! What! tears in your eyes? Has mamma disappointed you in that new dress you were coaxing her for this morning? Or is it because the mail has not brought a letter from Harry Sinclair?"

"No, papa, it's neither of these; but I have just received a letter from my friend, Emily Duncan, who is—"

"Coming here to pay us a visit, I suppose?"

"I cannot tell you, papa. Read for yourself," said Muriel, handing him the letter.

After perusing the letter, he said, "This is a very sad business, my darling! What would you wish me to do? How can I help your little friend?"

"Could we not have her here, papa, for a time?"

There was a look of pleasure in the colonel's face, as if the request had found an echo in his own heart.

"Why for a time?—why not for good? You want a companion—who so suitable as she?"

Muriel threw her arms round his neck, nearly smothering him with kisses.

"Oh, you dear old darling, how happy you have made me!"

Mrs. Barnett now entered, and perceiving the tears on Muriel's cheek, said, "My darling, has papa been scolding you?—or have you heard bad news?"

"Yes, Clara; Sunbeam's friend, Emily, is in trouble; her foster-mother is dead. Our pet wishes her to come to us; I think it is the best thing we can do. What do you say?"

"Our child's happiness has ever been our first study, Percy; need I say more?"

"Oh, thank you, dear mamma," said Muriel, embracing her; "you have always spoilt your pet, and gratified her every whim."

In family conclave it was settled that the colonel should run up to Lynemouth by the Sound steamer, and make every necessary arrangement for bringing Emily back with him.

Hardly had this important business been settled to their common satisfaction, when a telegram was handed to the colonel.

On reading it, he said, joyfully, "How odd that good news should travel so closely on the heels of bad! Harry Sinclair is in the city, and will be here soon."

Mrs. Barnett smiled significantly at Muriel, and after bestowing several kisses on her ruby lips, and affectionately patting her scarlet cheeks, whispered something, when both retired together.

Within the hour, a gentleman alighted from a coupe, and presenting his card, was ushered into the drawing-room.

It need hardly be stated that this was the expected cousin Harry.

He was a gentleman of about thirty-three, or thereabouts, and of good presence. His face, albeit much burnt by tropical suns, was a handsome one, and there was a certain air about him that had a tendency to make him look grave, or sad, or both.

When Harry Sinclair entered the drawing-room, he found Muriel, his cousin, seated at the piano, listlessly turning over some new music.

Her thoughts were evidently not with her present occupation.

Her attention was suddenly aroused by his entrance, and she started up to welcome him, but restrained herself when she looked up into his earnest eyes, and simply said, as they shook

hands: "Cousin Harry, I am very pleased to see you; you are most welcome to our home."

The reception was a little cool, when it is remembered that these two were betrothed to each other.

But Harry Sinclair did not seem to expect anything more. He simply said, in return: "Thank you, dear cousin; I'll try to deserve your welcome."

Colonel and Mrs. Barnett hearing that their nephew had arrived, hastened to join their daughter in welcoming their guest.

The evening was most pleasantly spent with music and conversation of his travels and adventures during his sojourn abroad, and that when it was time to retire, it seemed as if the time had passed by magic.

CHAPTER V.

CONFIDENCES.

THREE days after the receipt of Emily's letter, Colonel Barnett was on his way to Lynemouth.

The Hartfords received him with every mark of respect, but seemed very surprised at his unexpected visit.

He quickly explained his errand to Jasper, who expressed sorrow and gratitude at the colonel's kind offer.

Of course he was glad that Emily would have a good home, and be placed in the position she was so fitted to occupy.

At first Emily would not hear of the proposition, stating that her place was by her father's side now that her mother was taken from them; but Bob overruled her objections by telling her how poor both himself and father would always be if they remained as they were, getting nothing but their mere clothes and food, while several of their neighbors who had emigrated to the West were making rapid fortunes.

Young and inexperienced as she was, Emily saw the wisdom of Bob's words, and said, after a pause: "Do as you will, you know best, though I wish it could be otherwise, and we all be together."

It was arranged that Emily should be ready to accompany the colonel on the morrow to New York.

That evening Emily and Jasper walked hand in hand to the grave of the loved one, who was buried near her children.

The moon's rays fell upon the bowed form of him on whose broad breast she had pillowed her head for twenty years.

No words were uttered by the two mourners, but both their faces were bathed in tears, and they returned back to their homes as silently as they had come, their hearts being too full for utterance.

The next afternoon Colonel Barnett alighted from a hack at the Hartfords' cottage.

Emily received him at the door with a look of grief and pain in her face, as the time had now come when she was to part from her old home and its happy associations forever.

Her baggage was soon placed in the vehicle. Jasper kissed her again and again, saying:

"You will not forget your poor old foster-father?"

She pressed his brown hand, and in a husky voice replied:

"No, dear father, I never shall."

Turning to Bob, she said, in a pleading tone:

"Take care of our dear father, for such has he ever been to me, for now dear mother is gone he has only you to look to."

"Don't fear, Emily; father shall be my first care, and I hope before many years to return to my birth-place with the dear old dad, a wealthy man."

The last good-byes were said, the last kiss was given, and the colonel and Emily were driven off to the station.

Bob and Jasper stood at the gate straining their eyes after the fly, till the hot, scalding tears blinded their vision.

The travelers arrived by rail in New York that evening.

Muriel received her friend with open arms, and took her immediately up to her sanctum, as she styled her room.

The two girls were soon in animated conversation, and confidences were exchanged of their love affairs and their hopes and fears.

Mrs. Barnett, who was from home when her husband and Emily arrived, now entered and gave the bereaved girl a warm and motherly welcome.

A servant brought in tea, after partaking of which Emily felt somewhat refreshed and comforted.

Mrs. Barnett left them to dress for dinner, as the first bell had already rung.

Their only guest that evening was Harry Sinclair, which left them quite *en famille*.

The two girls having now finished their toilette, descended to the drawing-room, where they found Harry Sinclair, the colonel, and Mrs. Barnett.

Muriel introduced Emily to her cousin Harry, and the latter, after looking at her for a moment, said, in his usual grave way:

"Miss Duncan, I have surely seen you somewhere before, or at least somebody who resembles you a great deal. Ah, yes! I remember now; you are the very image of a dear friend, Clarice St. Quentin. Did you ever know a lady of that name?"

"No; I have not that pleasure," answered Emily, smiling a little.

He did not smile in return, but bit his lip and muttered to himself:

"How like she is to Clarice—how very like!"

The dinner passed off very pleasantly; but during the repast Harry Sinclair's eyes were constantly fixed upon Emily, as if searching for the solution of some mystery.

The young ladies, at a signal from Mrs. Barnett, adjourned to the drawing-room, leaving the two gentlemen to sip their wine.

During their conversation Harry brought up the name of their young guest, and made several inquiries of the colonel as to her parentage and friends.

The gentlemen lost no time in rejoining the ladies in the drawing-room, whom they found immersed in agreeable conversation.

Harry Sinclair amused the two girls with his tales of foreign countries.

He had a most engaging manner in his conversation, and his voice was deep and earnest, and the calm dignity of his words made his auditors give all their attention.

"Harry," said Muriel, all at once, while looking over a book of rare landscapes, "you were saying something about a lady who is so like my friend Emily. Who is she?—where does she live?—where did you meet her?"

"Well, little sweetheart, one question at a time, if you please. The lady in question—Clarice St. Quentin—is a widow.

"I first met her in Germany; we traveled by the same diligence for thirty miles; and when we reached the village of Erfurt, her father-in-law, who was her sole traveling-companion, became very ill—in fact, I thought he would die ere we reached the inn."

"It was an awkward and painful position for a lady," remarked Muriel; "alone and in a strange country with a sick companion."

"Yes; a dreadful predicament for a lady to be placed in," he replied. "But then Mrs. St. Quentin was not a woman easily frightened or nonplused, so she at once begged my assistance to help the invalid from the vehicle to the inn; and when I had done so, she said: 'May I trespass further on your kindness by asking you to secure us seats in the diligence that leaves to-morrow for Cologne? We intend to rest there for a time.'"

"Did you do so?" asked Emily, interested in the story.

"Of course I did. Men are, I trust, too gallant to disoblige a lady, especially when she is young and beautiful, Miss Duncan; and Clarice was indeed beautiful—very beautiful!"

Emily blushed as he said this, remembering what he had said of a resemblance between her

and Clarice St. Quentin; and Muriel, flushing slightly, asked:

"You said she was a widow, Harry; did she tell you this herself, or did she wear the signs of widowhood?"

"No; she told me with her own lips that her husband had died two years previously."

"Did her father-in-law die abroad, then?"

"No; I went with them to Cologne, and remained there for three months. On several occasions he was on the brink of the grave, but by tender nursing on the part of his daughter he recovered. And three months ago, when I parted with them at Antwerp, he was as sound, physically, as I am to-day."

The conversation now dropped, as the colonel asked Muriel to give them some music.

The lamps were burning low and the moonlight was streaming in through the half-open windows, and falling in light fantastic shapes on the rich velvet-pile carpet, as Muriel, seated at the piano, played one of Mozart's sonatas brilliantly.

Emily and she then sung, "Sunlight and Moonlight," a charming duet, their fresh young voices blending harmoniously together.

Song followed song, many of which were sung by Harry Sinclair, who had a beautiful tenor voice.

The two girls bade Harry good-night, and tripped up-stairs to bed.

"Oh, Emily, isn't he handsome!" exclaimed Muriel, as soon as they had reached their chamber, clasping her hands together, and drawing a long breath.

"Yes," answered Emily, "but not very affectionate; cold as an iceberg, and gloomy as one of those old cathedrals he seems so fond of describing."

"But he will not be so after we know him better, Emily; besides, he seemed affectionate enough at times."

"Yes, when he spoke of his Clarice."

Muriel's eyes dropped, and her heart gave a great apprehensive bound.

Nothing further was said until Muriel had all her purple-black hair floating about her lovely shoulders, and as she braided it up for the night she exclaimed, with an earnestness in her voice altogether rare: "Do you think, Emily, Harry loves Mrs. St. Quentin?"

Emily was surprised at the question, but she adroitly managed to conceal her feelings, and answered. "How absurd! Has not Harry been engaged to you ever so long, and is not this Clarice—what did he call her?"

"St. Quentin."

"Yes—this Clarice St. Quentin a widow, and twice as old as you?"

"But then he says she is beautiful; and men sometimes have such queer taste."

Emily looked at the speaker as she sat on the bedside arranging her hair in an abstracted way, and thought, "This widow must be very beautiful indeed if she wins Harry Sinclair from you."

Meanwhile the object of their conversation was pacing his room like a caged lion, thinking of the past, and of the golden-haired vision that never left him for a moment.

CHAPTER VI.

A MISTAKEN PASSION.

CLARICE ST. QUENTIN ought to have been perfectly happy; she had everything that could constitute the joys of this life.

Above all, she was now at Newport, having left several discarded lovers and broken lives behind her in Europe.

Here she was free as air, in gossamer garments on the sands, in the autumn sunshine.

There was a charming blue sea beside her, a balmy fluttering breeze around her, a crowd of the most fashionable sunshades before her, like a bed of variegated flowers.

She was a beautiful woman still, or the men would not have followed and stared at her so; and yet, with all this, she was not enjoying herself.

It was very hard.

The yachts came and went, the sands glit-

tered, the music sounded, the men pulled themselves about in little shells, the cottages were lively with awnings and beautiful flowers; people, the gayest and most aristocratic in our democratic country, laughed, and chattered, and made love, and Clarice with them, pacing the beach with her pretty high-heel shoes; but for all that she was wretched.

She was thinking to herself, "Where is he?—why does he not write to me? How on earth can I live without him?"

It ruined her morning walk, and clouded the sunshine, it made the waltzes sound like dirges, and even made her chief rival look almost good-looking.

"Where on earth are you running to, Cyril?" exclaimed Clarice to a tall, good-looking, well-built, and very fair Englishman, who now came up, and who, being madly in love with her, followed her from Europe.

"Why, in search of you," he answered. "Where have you been hiding yourself this morning?"

"I have been simply walking about looking at those donkeys cramping themselves in such tight boots—what fools! And now, as you have been such a truant and only just turned up, I will punish you by going in to luncheon, as the sun is getting very hot."

"You do not mean to be so cruel, Clarice?" he said, looking earnestly into her eyes. "I declare I should have joined you before this, but have been detained answering most important letters that demanded my instant attention."

She made no answer, but put her delicate gloved hand on his arm.

Cyril, Lord Sherbrooke, strolled by her side, gazing passionately down into her eyes.

She seemed to be walking in a dream, evidently unconscious of the love she had inspired in the young nobleman's heart.

"Clarice, you are in some trouble. I pray you confide in me. I see it in the look of pain that suffuses your whole face at times."

"Oh, don't bother, Cyril! I assure you there's nothing the matter with me; and now I must leave you," she said, sharply, "as I'm not too good-tempered this morning with the world in general, or myself, or you in particular."

He took a step forward, and made a deprecating gesture, which she disregarded, and swept onward, with a haughty mien, into her own cottage.

If Lord Sherbrooke had only known the true cause of her ill-humor he would have been less at his ease than he was, as he stood and watched her disappear, with a moody expression on his mobile face.

Going straight to her boudoir, she quickly disrobed herself, muttering, "Thank Heaven, I am released from the shackles of fashion! Would that I could as easily free myself from the fetters that threaten to crush my heart!"

Taking up a portrait, she murmured, sadly, "Oh, Harry, my love, why do you treat me so cruelly? Why this silence?"

Tears were wet on her lashes and her mouth quivered; a vague dread, a sense of apprehension that she could not have explained, was upon her; and yet, when she looked at the miniature, a delighted expression stole over her features, and you could hear the loud beating of her heart.

The house was hushed, and all was silent, but the mystery of human passion was in it.

"Clarice," said a quavering voice outside her door, "do you know that the luncheon is waiting?"

"I will join you almost directly, papa."

La Dijon, was nothing more or less than a very fashionable house, appointed with every luxury and elegance that art and wealth could devise.

But Clarice was very lonely, notwithstanding the numbers that gathered about her.

Calming herself, she joined Mr. St. Quentin at the luncheon-table.

"What fre's you this morning, Clarice?" asked her father, in a gentle tone. "You are

not looking your usual bright self. Have you heard any bad news from Lynemouth?"

"I have heard neither good nor bad, as my letters, from some unexplained cause, remain unanswered."

"This is strange news; but let us hope it is not so bad as you think. By the by, have you seen Lord Sherbrooke this morning? I really think, Clarice, he has given his whole heart and soul to you."

"Do not speak to me of him! I detest him, and would not marry him if he laid a crown at my feet! My mind is so distracted with one thing and another, that, if you consent, we shall return to Boston and from thence to the mountains."

"Anything that conduces to your happiness will content me. When do you propose to start?"

"In three days time."

"Then I must order the yacht to be in readiness."

As soon as luncheon was finished Mr. St. Quentin proceeded on his errand.

Clarice paced up and down her veranda. The sunny world was quiet about her, as the elite were safely ensconced indoors, in *negligee* robes, sipping coffee and iced drinks, and conversing upon the latest scandal of the day.

The men lounged in their club-rooms, discussed the *debut* of the latest opera-singer and ballet-dancer, whiling away and killing time as best they could, until the sun had ceased to blaze, and the world of Newport began to live again in anticipation of dinner.

She moved up and down, fatiguing herself, though unconscious of fatigue. She was alone, and there was no one to look upon her face and see its pain, its weariness, and its utter wretchedness.

Her skirts of olive velvet swept the white stones. Her fair hair was coiled loosely, with a golden arrow run through it. Round her throat were strings of pearls, the jewels of mourning.

All women envied her the riches of which those pearls were emblems.

Every now and then she would stop and murmur to herself, "Did I murder him? His face haunts me night and day. Oh, heavens! how can I look into the innocent eyes of my child?"

She stopped suddenly, for at her feet lay a bouquet of forget-me-nots and violets, and she heard a voice say softly, "Clarice, I have been watching you for this last half-hour, oh, with such deep agony! Will you not let me share whatever trouble you may be suffering? Give me that right, darling?" he pleaded.

He was standing on the stone *perron* below.

"Oh, Cyril, why waste such a wealth of love as yours upon me? I am not worthy of it—indeed, I am not!"

And the proud and lovely golden head was bowed on the balcony rail, and she sobbed aloud in her agony as if her heart would break.

Lifting himself a little higher, he sprung over to her side.

Taking her hand in his, he softly murmured, "Clarice, my angel, not to love you would be more than mortal man could help, and because of that I came to say farewell, as I see to be near you is madness. I will return to England to-night, banish myself forever from your sight, if I am the cause of these tears."

"No, no, Cyril!" she exclaimed; "you have been so good—too good to me. Don't leave me now; be still my friend. Have patience with me a little longer. In three days' time I shall be on my way to Boston. I want change. I am tired of all this hollow-minded crowd of butterflies!"

Lord Sherbrooke's handsome face looked grave and sad as she spoke, for he felt that this lovely golden-haired woman would never be his very own.

He caught her hand, and imprinted a long and burning kiss on it; then, with a despairing sigh, he disappeared, and she was alone.

Picking up the bouquet of flowers, she murmured:

"Why did he ever love me? Would that I could prevent him from hovering round me as a moth does round a candle!"

CHAPTER VII.

A STORMY SEA.

THE Kelpie was one of the best yachts on the high seas, had a good cook, wonderful wines, a piano, a library, a cabin of carved oak and green satin, and was, in fact, a model of elegance and comfort.

Mr. St. Quentin and Clarice embarked on the yacht with a few of their intimate friends who were to accompany them to Boston.

Clarice looked radiantly lovely in a charming costume of white serge and navy-blue satin, with anchor buttons in silver, and a Norwegian belt hung with everything that the mind of man could imagine as going on to a girdle.

The sky is bright, a gentle wind is blowing, the short blue ripples break in silver lace-work of foam, and the merry party are leaning over the side, gazing upon the glittering expanse.

"She's going splendidly now!" said Mr. St. Quentin; "and I think that we shall have a bit of a breeze soon."

"I believe we're going straight across the ocean," said the saucy voice of Kate Manton, the favorite friend of Clarice.

She was a lovely girl of very slight form, with a delicate olive skin, a tiny impertinent nose, an artistic tangle of blue-black hair, and a wonderful expression of mingled impudence, shrewdness, audacity, and resolution.

She was standing with her hands behind her head, a rosebud in her mouth, and two or three men around her.

"I hope not, dear Kate. I'm looking forward to behold soon the harbor of dear old Boston," said Clarice.

"Oh, gracious, how she's pitching! I shall certainly not be able to keep up my equilibrium much longer," said Kate. "This kind of business won't suit my appetite. Have you got any iced drinks about?"

"Well, hold on to me. I will see that you do not fall," said Captain Dawtry, one of her admirers, in a pleading tone.

"Don't talk nonsense, but go and get me some peaches, or anything that is nice, there's a good fellow!" said she, waving her hand in an imperious manner toward the lower cabin.

And so the time passed pleasantly in flirting, dancing, music, card-playing, etc.

The yacht touched at several villages and watering-places to land some of the friends, and there were only Mr. St. Quentin, Clarice, Kate and Captain Dawtry left on board.

The voyage up till now had passed as merry as a marriage-bell.

The breeze, as inspiring as a cordial, had swept over the deck, leaving the yacht softly and rhythmically rolling with the swell.

There was a red moon hanging like a gigantic Chinese lantern over the sea toward the coast line.

She dropped a trickle of blood-red light in the water, and gave the dark ocean and the velvet sky a spectral and lurid appearance.

On deck were the captain and the man at the helm.

Three or four seamen were sitting in the bows, and the low murmurs of their voices came along with the draughts of air which circled at every swaying of the yacht.

They were in earnest conversation.

"It looks like squally weather coming on us, mates," said one of the party. "Do you think the Kelpie can ride through these seas should the storm strike upon us?"

"She's a tight little craft enough, and should do so," returned a weather-beaten tar.

The captain at this juncture, in an authoritative tone, called to the seamen to lower the sails and to be ready for any emergency, as they were bound to encounter dirty weather, and that very soon.

In the saloon all was bright and sparkling.

Clarice was exquisitely arrayed, with cascades of old Mechlin falling from her throat to her feet; her eyes sparkled, her smile was all sunshine and sweetness.

She and Kate had only just finished a charming duet, when the captain stood before them with a blanched face and stern look in his eyes.

Bowing to the ladies, he asked for a moment's conversation with Mr. St. Quentin and Captain Dawtry.

Kate, seeing the captain's troubled looks, exclaimed:

"There is something wrong. Do not keep it from us. We are women, and will take our share of any danger."

"My dear ladies, I cannot say there is anything wrong at present, but be prepared, for I fear we may have a rough night of it."

The two gentlemen followed the captain on to the deck.

"Oh, dear, Clarice, do you think we really are in danger?"

"I trust not, dear Kate!"

The yacht was now pitching and tossing to a violent extent.

Brave little Kate trembled in every limb as she exclaimed, in a heart-broken voice:

"We shall be lost, and I shall never see Cyril's loved face again!"

"What did you say about Cyril, Kate? Do you mean Lord Sherbrooke?"

"Yes, I love him; but I fear he does not return my love."

Clarice threw herself at the feet of her friend, and wound her arms round the girl's waist, and said:

"You have indeed made me happy, for you are the only woman worthy of his love, and he shall love you, my bonny Kate!"

At this moment Captain Dawtry rushed wildly in, exclaiming:

"We are lost!"

Before he could finish speaking there was a terrific shock and snapping, and the yacht was at the mercy of the boiling waters.

All rushed on deck, Clarice calling out for her father.

Mr. St. Quentin was helping the crew with the pumps, as the yacht was fast filling with water.

The surf was roaring; the air was full of the fog of the spray from it.

Rocket after rocket was sent up as a signal of distress to those on shore.

The craft shivered like a creature instinct with life as she groped her way blindly through the surf-lined sea, rudderless, defenseless, and rushing madly to destruction.

At this terrible moment an answering rocket-signal was seen from the shore, and a cannon boomed forth its summons to the crew of the life-boat to assemble for their perilous work.

CHAPTER VIII.

A GALLANT RESCUE.

LIFE has been very pleasant to our heroine since the date of her adoption by Colonel Barnett, and she and Muriel had learned to love each other very dearly.

They are talking now of their projected trip to the seaside, and making arrangements for their journey.

"You have never seen the sea, Muriel," exclaimed Emily, "but when you do, you will just go wild over it. The white, sandy beach and the great green waves—oh, it is so beautiful!"

"But not half so beautiful as yourself," said a voice close behind the girl, and turning round, they met the gaze of Basil Maitland.

"Oh, you eavesdropper!" said Emily, as she darted a roguish glance at him, while her eyes dropped and her face was suffused with blushes; "if you come playing those tricks, and ferreting out our little secrets any more, I'll punish you by sending you into exile again, to do penance over those musty old books of yours."

"Oh, dearest Emily, I crave for mercy, and will never offend again, upon my honor!"

"Well, I think we will forgive him, Emily; he seems contrite," said Muriel.

"I may tell you, now that I am here, young ladies, that I was sent by Colonel and Mrs. Barnett and Harry, to fetch you to a council of war which is being held in the library."

"Oh, do tell us what it is!" exclaimed both girls in a breath. "Have we got invitations for the Regiment ball?"

"No, you pair of inquisitors; it's concerning our projected trip to the seaside."

"Oh, then lead the way—we're ready," said Muriel; and they followed Basil into the library.

That night all was arranged—Cohasset was the place selected for their holidays, and all were satisfied.

A few days later they were settled comfortably in a very pretty cottage house on the beach.

Muriel and Emily were delighted. It was their first night there, and they stood by their chamber window, giving expressions of pleasure, but Muriel wonderment, at the strange and novel sight.

"How silent, and yet how grand it all seems now," said Muriel; "how peaceful and calm!"

"Ah, dear Muriel, but you should see it in all its fury, as I have seen it, with the waves dashing higher than this house, and large ships tossed about like corks, and hear the dying shrieks of drowning creatures as they sink before our very eyes, and we are powerless to save them."

"Oh, dear Emily, don't tell me any more; I feel so cold,"—and the girl shivered involuntarily as she spoke. "To think that anything so beautiful can be so relentless!"

"Come, I've given you a fit of the blues, Muriel. Cheer up! You know I have been bred near the sea, and am accustomed to its good and bad fits of temper."

Being thoroughly tired and wearied, the two girls retired to rest.

Next morning found them betimes on the beach with Harry and Basil.

They explored every nook and corner within their reach, visited the best shops, and spent the day very happily.

During the day the colonel and Mrs. Barnett had met several old acquaintances, whom they invited to dinner that evening.

Bright eyes and diamonds sparkled in the drawing-room, and after a most enjoyable dinner, a stroll on the beach was proposed, which was readily assented to by all the party.

As they approached the beach, distant peals of thunder were heard, and forked lightning flashed across the sky, like fiery spears hurled by giant hands, while gathering clouds gave an ominous forecast of a coming storm.

"What a dreadful night we may expect! And see, Percy, the storm-signals are up along the coast," said Mrs. Barnett. "May Heaven protect all those on the sea this night!"

"Ah," returned the colonel, "that accounts for the statement I read in the *Times* this morning of a severe storm which is traveling from the North here."

Basil, with the vivacity of youth exclaimed, "The Canadians seem to send us all their bad weather before they've quite done with it themselves. Upon my word, I believe they manufacture storms for our especial benefit!" Pointing seaward, he continued, "Look, there is the advanced guard of the enemy stealing this way, shrouded in mist and rain; and hark to the loud whistle of the storm-fiend as he rides on the surf-crested waves!"

"Why, Basil," said Muriel, in a bantering tone, "you are quite poetical!"

As she spoke, heavy drops of rain began to descend, and as the ladies were dressed in light garments, they immediately returned to the house.

What with the roar of the waves and the incessant thunder and downpour of rain, it was found impossible to have any music or to enter into conversation; so they assembled in the

drawing-room, the windows of which faced the sea, to watch the progress of the storm, which was one of great violence.

Harry Sinclair, who was looking through a powerful telescope, suddenly exclaimed, "There's a small vessel being driven toward the shore! There's a rocket sent up from her! I'm afraid she will founder before assistance can reach her."

Basil immediately proposed that the gentlemen should go down to the beach to see what assistance they could render.

The proposal was well received by the ladies, who applauded the suggestion and felt sorry that they were debarred from taking part in such a noble undertaking as the saving of life.

When they arrived on the beach, it was thronged with fishermen and others, all of whom were eagerly watching the doomed vessel and commiserating her condition.

Answering rockets shot up into the air from the coast-guard station, and the boom of a cannon warned the crew of the life-boat that their services were required.

The surf was roaring. By this time she had been driven close enough to the shore to make her easy enough to be seen through the mist.

As she came broadside down on the great crests of the seas, with her strips of canvas streaming like white hair upon the gale, the spectators held their breath with apprehension.

At last she struck; but although several figures were seen on her deck, their voices were inaudible, owing to the din and strife of the elements.

The life-boat was launched; the sturdy crew bent to their oars with a will, knowing that human beings depended upon their exertions to save them.

It took them some short time to cross the breakers. They were now near the vessel, and heard the pouring of water and felt the wind slacken down, and then they found themselves close under the lee of the wreck.

The next sea threw them up so high that they could look right down on her sloping deck, where Clarice and Kate stood near the mast, to which they clung with grim despair.

It would be tedious to relate how the brave fellows first rescued the women, and next Captain Dawtry and the crew, Mr. St. Quentin having been washed overboard when the vessel first struck.

CHAPTER IX.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

THE life-boat flew through the water on its return journey, as if conscious it was about to deposit those who had been saved from the wreck in safety on *terra firma*.

No sooner did the bow drive through the surf, and touch the land, than a dozen stout fellows rushed forward and pulled it out of reach of the sea.

Kate Manton, despite her forlorn condition—her clothes, hair and whole person, in fact, having been deluged by salt water—was full of energy and vivacity.

"We want a big hotel where the sea can't play any pranks," she said. "Will some gentleman send for a carriage? I'm afraid my poor friend, Clarice St. Quentin, has fainted."

"Clarice St. Quentin?" said Harry Sinclair. "Surely I know the lady."

Pushing through the crowd, he snatched a lantern from a bystander, and by its light recognized Clarice.

"Well, young man," said Kate, "what is it—yes or no? I fancy you know her; I can see it from your looks."

"She is a very old and dear friend of mine," said Harry.

"Thank goodness we have some friends in the place, then!" said Kate. "And now that you've found us, what are you going to do for us? Hurry up, stranger; wet clothes don't suit us at all."

Colonel Barnett, who had overheard the conversation, touched Harry on the arm, and said:

"You can place my house and all it contains at the service of the ladies."

Kate gave Harry no time to follow the colonel's permission, for she said: "Thanks; we shall be only too happy to avail ourselves of your kind offer—that is, if you can find room for three—myself, Mrs. St. Quentin and Captain Dawtry."

"Nothing could afford me greater pleasure, madam," the colonel replied.

A couple of carriages drove up, and Clarice was placed in one of them, Harry taking his place at her side to support her inanimate form.

Great excitement prevailed when it became known that three persons rescued from the yacht were to become inmates of Colonel Barnett's household.

Everybody, more especially the ladies, was anxious to do everything in his or her power for the sufferers.

Kate and her friend were consigned to the care of Mrs. Barnett, while the colonel took charge of Captain Dawtry.

Luckily there was a doctor in the house among the guests, and he attended at once to Clarice, who soon recovered from her swoon, and was able to converse with her kind hostess, although she was in a very weak condition.

"Where is my father? Is he saved? I now remember all the horrors of last night."

"Calm yourself, my dear lady," said Mrs. Barnett, holding the invalid's hand in a warm and friendly clasp. "I know you must have suffered much; but try and banish from your mind that horrid black dream, for you are now among friends."

As she spoke, Kate Manton quietly entered the room and stood by her friend's couch.

"Well, dear Clarice, are you any better? Cheer up, dear! I have come to tell you some good news. We have fallen among friends. What will you say when I tell you that the first male I met on this hospitable shore was a friend of yours?"

"A friend of mine?"

"Yes; and what do you think he did?"

"I haven't the faintest notion."

"Carried you to a carriage in an insensible condition, and never left you till you were safe indoors. Have you no curiosity to know who he is?"

"Of course I have, Kate. Haven't I been waiting patiently for you to tell me? Who is he?"

"You won't shriek, or tear your hair, or jump out the window if I tell you?"

Ill as she felt, Clarice could not help laughing as she declared she had no intention of committing any of the acts Kate so much dreaded.

Mrs. Barnett was an amused listener to the conversation.

"Well, now that you have promised to be good," said Kate, "I will tell you who he is not."

"Shame on you, Kate, to tantalize me so! What shall I do to her, Mrs. Barnett?"

"Have patience with her," was the laughing reply.

"Well, I won't tease you any more. It was Harry Sinclair."

The pallor deepened on Clarice's face, and, starting up in bed, she clutched Kate by the arm, saying: "Harry Sinclair! Are you sure? In pity's sake, Kate, do not mislead me!"

She sunk back on her pillow, almost exhausted by the force of her emotion, while Mrs. Barnett looked on with surprise, not unmixed with curiosity.

Poor Kate was sorry for what she had done, as it had not been her intention to excite her friend.

"Dear Clarice," she murmured, as she caressed her golden hair, "pray do not be agitated. What is the man to you?"

"Nothing; only a dear friend, about whom I was getting anxious. I am glad to have my anxiety allayed."

"Would you like to see him, Clarice?"

"Yes—that is, no, not just yet. I do not feel strong enough to bear excitement. My nerves have received a great shock."

Mrs. Barnett, actuated by the best intentions, now said:

"I am sure both the colonel and Muriel, as well as myself, are glad to find that Mr. Sinclair is a friend of yours, Mrs. St. Quentin."

"He is a common friend, then?" Clarice asked, in a tone of eager inquiry.

"Yes; he is our nephew, and the affianced husband of our daughter Muriel."

It was well for Clarice that her face was averted from the speaker, otherwise she would have betrayed herself by the expression of despair and anger which chased each other like clouds in a summer sky.

Kate saw it all, and conjectured that her friend had been wounded in her innermost soul by the revelation, which had come upon her like a thunderbolt.

"I think we shall leave her to rest awhile," said Mrs. Barnett; "the doctor has advised perfect quiet for her, and you, too, stand in need of repose."

"Clarice," said Kate, "would you like me to go or stay?"

"Only for a moment, Kate. I ask you solemnly, and beg you will answer the question frankly, that I may know the worst—is Mr. St. Quentin saved?"

Kate and Mrs. Barnett exchanged glances, as if hoping to find assistance from each other out of their perplexity.

"Why do you not answer me, Kate?"

"Because I have no knowledge of why it was he did not come with us in the life-boat."

It was a clever answer, and led up to a disagreeable fact without the truth being told.

"It is enough," said Clarice, sadly; "one more link in the past has been severed; another friend has been struck off the muster-roll of life. Heaven grant that those still left may prove as loving and true as he did!"

Hiding her face with her hand, through the fingers of which the tears trickled, Clarice gave a palpable hint to her companions that she wished to be alone with her grief.

CHAPTER X.

A DENOUEMENT.

THE lovely invalid was fast gaining strength under the kind attentions of her new friends, all of whom were most anxious to be of service to her.

Emily was deputed head nurse, and on seeing her Clarice was struck with the resemblance she bore to herself, and many were the questions with which she artfully plied her as to her birth and parentage.

"Pardon my seeming curiosity, my dear child," Clarice remarked, with a sweet smile. "But I think you will excuse it when I tell you that I lost a darling baby, which, if it had lived, would have been about your age. Won't you come and kiss me?"

Emily's kind heart and gentle nature responded to this appeal from one who had evidently suffered much, and was at the present moment passing through the waters of affliction.

The kiss given, Emily, at her request, seated herself close beside her.

"You are not angry with me?" said Clarice, as she caressed the hand she held in her own.

"It is very good of you," said Emily, "to take such an interest in a motherless girl. Kindness and sympathy will never raise any other emotion within my breast but that of gratitude."

"Motherless?" echoed Clarice, in a tone of astonishment. "But I ask your pardon again for touching upon what must be a painful subject. It is sad at your age to feel alone in the world."

There was a tender, yearning look in her beautiful eyes, as if she longed to press the fair girl to her heart, and to assure her of her love and friendship.

"I am not friendless or alone," said Emily, softly. "My adopted father and brother love me dearly, and, although poor themselves, would never see me want; besides, I have

friends here, who are constantly giving me fresh marks of their deep affection."

"This is not your home, then?"

"Oh, no—it is at Lynemouth; but Mrs. Hartford, my more than mother, is dead, and I have been adopted by Colonel and Mrs. Barnett."

"Your name is not Hartford, then? How stupid of me to have forgotten!"

"No; it is Duncan."

Although she more than suspected this fact, the answer caused her to give a start of surprise, and to grip Emily's hand so tightly as to cause pain.

Clarice was now fully aware that the child she had so cruelly deserted, and about whose welfare she had not until recently troubled herself, stood before her, budding into womanhood, some one to be proud of, but about whom no credit could be claimed by her.

It was humiliating to look into her child's face, beaming with sweetness and rare intelligence, and to feel that strangers had fostered her from her earliest infancy—had shared home, love, ay, even food itself with her, when she, the mother who had borne her, was living in the lap of luxury, surrounded by wealth, a small percentage of which would have helped the honest folk who had so cheerfully assumed responsibility which really belonged to herself.

The still small voice of conscience, which pleasure and the surroundings of wealth had lulled to unnatural repose, awakened sharp reproaches, which stung and maddened, as if some invisible hand hurled fiery darts of remorse that pierced her worldly heart through and through. Even the knowledge that the girl, her own flesh and blood, had grown into a perfect little lady in point of person, manners, and education, brought her no consolation, because it had not been brought about by her agency.

"Have you never seen your real mother or heard from her?" asked Clarice, after a silence of some minutes, during which she had been busy with her own thoughts.

"I have not seen her, and, strange and unnatural as it may appear, I have no wish to do so. I owe her no love, affection or allegiance. Her unkind neglect of me, at a time when my very weakness ought to have appealed with greater force to her love and protection, has weaned me effectually from all filial feelings toward her, whoever she may be."

These reproaches, uttered innocently enough and without any intention to wound, went home like dagger-thrusts to the very soul of the proud woman, who listened to and writhed under them as if suffering from the lash of some tyrant who had assailed her unexpectedly.

"But surely your adopted parents could not have supported and educated you without assistance? Your mother did not, I hope, wholly neglect you? But I see the subject is a painful one, and I will not pursue it. I would be alone now," she added, after a short silence. "Kiss me, darling, and promise to let me share with Mrs. Barnett the responsibility of aiding you to fight the battle of life. I am rich and childless, and, strange as it may appear, feel all the yearning of a fond mother when I think of you and your past life."

Emily kissed her, but did not reply to her remarks, as she had no wish to share the love she felt for the Barnetts with a perfect stranger, about whom she knew absolutely nothing, and who had awakened in her breast no emotion save that of sympathy.

When she had gone, Clarice became restless, and rising, paced the floor in a state of great agitation.

She longed for the companionship of Harry Sinclair, whose loving words could alone heal the wounds which her pride had received.

The discovery she had made led her to suspect that another disagreeable disclosure was in store for her when she met Harry Sinclair, who could not keep his engagement to Muriel from her knowledge.

The name of Barnett, too, was associated with

the past of long ago, when she made the fatal mistake of marrying a penniless man; but on this score she was perfectly easy, as no surprise could be in store for her from that quarter, as her old friend, and more than brother, had died years ago, having been killed in battle.

She had seen his name in the official list of killed, and was perfectly convinced that the similarity of name between her host and her dead friend was a mere coincidence.

Unable to bear the restraint of being confined to her own room, and being of a willful nature, she explored the corridor, and seeing a door ajar, peeped in.

It was the library, and seated with a book in his hand was Harry Sinclair, who, on catching sight of her face, hastened to greet her.

"This is indeed an unexpected pleasure!" he observed. "You are nearly well again, I hope?"

"Yes," she replied. "Your daily inquiries did much to hasten my restoration to health. They proved to me I was not forgotten by the only man I have ever truly loved. Oh, Harry, how could you deceive me so cruelly?"

He had placed a chair for her, and they were seated close together, gazing into each other's eyes, as if to plumb the depth of their affection.

"Deceived you, darling Clarice?" he said. "How? In what way?"

"You are engaged to Miss Barnett!"

The startled expression and the flush which dyed his brow told how the shaft had gone home.

"You need not explain," she said, satirically. "I presume you cannot deny it either. I heard the welcome intelligence from the lips of her mother. I have also seen your fiancée, and admire your taste. You are to be congratulated."

There was an hysterical sob in her voice that alarmed him and made him apprehensive of a scene. He therefore hastened to say, in his most soothing tone, "Listen to me, Clarice. I do not love Muriel Barnett; my heart is wholly yours!"

"And yet"—this with a covert sneer and a passionate look of contempt—"you would lead her to the altar, and wreck both her life and mine!"

"You do me a cruel injustice," he said.

"I fail to see that," she replied.

In an ante-room leading off the library, Muriel Barnett lay on a sofa, listening half-dreamily to the conversation which had reference to her engagement. She felt hurt and indignant, but some spell chained her to where she lay, and kept her from rising to protest vehemently against such an outrage.

"The engagement was the work of my father," he replied. "If I fail to carry out his wishes, half my worldly wealth goes to enrich her."

"And are you so mercenary?" she asked, with flashing eyes.

"No," he replied; "not mercenary, but prudent. Are you entirely blameless in the matter? Have I not told you of my deep, passionate love, and asked you to be my wife, and your answer has been evasive? If I cannot possess you, it is my duty to obey my father's wishes."

A low cry of anguish broke from the lips of the girl, who lay suffering tortures from which she could not escape, the power of volition being denied her.

It was Clarice's turn to cast down her eyes in confusion. She could not deny his accusation, nor did she dare reveal the reason for her conduct to him.

She feared that a secret which had haunted her like a second self, that had followed her silently, but unerringly, like a sleuth-hound, should pass into the possession of the man who became her *third* husband. How true is it that "a guilty conscience makes cowards of us all!" She had murmured it on the terrace facing the sea at Newport, and frequently had she caught herself incontinently uttering the

same fearful words. Could she tell the man she loved the truth? Would he not shrink from her with loathing, and crush her beneath a whirlwind of reproach?"

As she continued silent, Harry Sinclair, taking her hand, said: "Clarice, answer me truly: will you be my wife?"

At this juncture the door opened, admitting Colonel Barnett, while, at the same moment, Muriel emerged from the ante-room, looking pale and indignant.

CHAPTER XI.

TRACKED.

BOTH Harry Sinclair and Clarice had seen too much of the world not to be able to get out of the disagreeable fix they had got into unwittingly. One glance at Muriel's face convinced Sinclair that she had overheard all that had passed. She might probably reveal all to her father on the impulse of the moment, now that he, too, was on the scene.

To divert attention, and to forestall any disagreeable intention on the part of Muriel, he said:

"Permit me, uncle, to introduce this lady, your mysterious guest, whom you have not yet met, although she has been an inmate of your house for days. Mrs. St. Quentin—Colonel Barnett."

"If I am not mistaken," said the colonel, advancing with outstretched hand toward Clarice, "this lady and I are very old friends, although many years have passed since last we met. Is it not so, madam? You were then Mrs. Duncan."

"Is it possible?" she cried, in a tone of unaffected surprise. "Do I hold the hand of my dear friend and brother, Percy Barnett, the playmate of my youth, the protector of my widowhood, and the benefactor of myself and child?"

Harry Sinclair moved to the door through which Muriel was passing, as he had no wish to spoil the mutual confidences of old friends by the presence of a third party. Neither had Muriel, although in the first flush of her indignation she had been on the eve of revealing all to her father, leaving it to him to vindicate her position.

Colonel Barnett and Clarice having satisfied themselves that they were indeed old and dear friends, settled down to a long chat.

In answer to his inquiry about her child, she replied:

"The little thing died when quite a baby. I am so sorry that it should have happened so, as otherwise she would have been a companion for me by now."

There was a look of incredulity on his face which did not escape her, but she was too diplomatic and well versed in the ways of the world to pretend that she had noticed it.

Had she been asked why she had made this misstatement of facts she would have been puzzled for a ready reply.

The question, however, was so pointed, and the danger of appearing old in Sinclair's eyes—old enough, in fact, to be the mother of his fiancée—provoked the answer. She felt perfectly safe in answering as she did, inasmuch as her own child could not convict her, nor was it likely that the Hartfords could either, as the woman was dead, and she had only seen the man for a few minutes.

Had she not been surprised into disavowing Emily, she might in time have claimed her when it suited her purpose to do so.

She quite enjoyed Colonel Barnett's embarrassment, although it was unexpressed, nor would she help him out of it by a word of hers.

"It's very strange!" he muttered aloud, more to himself than her. "The likeness is so complete, and the age tallies so exactly with the date!"

"To what might you allude?" she asked. "Pardon the question, colonel, but I fancy I can answer it myself. The girl, Emily Duncan, resembles me, but let me assure you it is a mere coincidence. Could you think me guilty of deserting my own child for years

when I was in a position to support her in every luxury?—or to run the risk of her losing all semblance to a lady in point of education and manners, by allowing her to remain with people who, if honest, were very, very poor, as she herself has told me they were?"

What could the colonel do but hasten to say, "My dear madam, you are the last person to act such a part. I must confess that the name and likeness prepared me to believe that Emily was your daughter."

"I thank you, dear Percy (pardon my old familiar way of speaking to you), for your kindness to the girl on my account—was it not so?"

"I must candidly confess that thinking she was your child I sympathized with her position and resolved to befriend her if needed."

"You were very good," she murmured.

"But now that I know her so thoroughly I quite love her, almost as much as I do my own daughter, so that my disappointment will make no difference to her."

"I am glad of that," she said. "Did you ever mention my supposed relationship to her or to her foster-parents?"

"Never; I carefully abstained from mentioning my more than suspicion to anybody, even to my own wife, and least of all to Emily herself, lest I should raise hopes which might never be realized."

"It was most judicious of you." Then, as if anxious to change the subject, she began to talk of her eventful life, of her meeting with Harry Sinclair, and of the pleasure it gave her to learn that he was the affianced husband of Muriel.

She did not quite like the expression of distrust that came over his face on learning from her own lips how intimate the acquaintance had been between her and his nephew.

She was alive, too, to the danger of remaining his guest in company with a man she loved so passionately longer than was consistent with her condition of an invalid.

Kate Manton entered at this juncture.

"Well, this is a pleasant surprise! Why, my dear Clarice, I've been hunting all over the house for you!"

"It was only by accident that I found my way in here; and I'm sure you will be pleased to learn that our kind host is a very old and dear friend of mine, whom I had heard was dead years ago. I cannot tell you how happy it has made me, and I feel almost strong again."

"Well, there's been nothing but a chapter of accidents and surprises ever since we left Newport," said Kate. "They say 'All's well that ends well.' I hope it will be so in our case."

"I, for one, am very gratified at seeing Mrs. St. Quentin so much better, and more so at having met in your friend an old playmate of days gone by," said Colonel Barnett. Then, turning to Clarice, he said, "I trust we may now have the pleasure of seeing you among our circle?"

Begging to be excused on the plea of attending to important letters, the colonel bowed and retired.

"Well, Clarice, this is jolly! There's only one thing to cast a black shadow over my heart."

"Yes, dear Kate; it has been a sad loss to me, for he has been as a father to me for many years."

"It's no use spending our time in vain regrets, Clarice. Come, cheer up, dear! Just look at the sun dancing on the waves! How cheerful and inspiring it looks!"

As she spoke, Kate pulled up the sash of the window for her friend to inhale the fresh sea-breeze.

The noise made by the sudden opening of the window attracted the attention of a gentleman who was sauntering leisurely along, who immediately looked up in the direction whence it proceeded.

His eyes were immediately fixed upon Clarice, who stood as if fascinated by the gaze of a serpent.

"Good heavens! has he tracked me here?" she muttered.

"Dear me! how that fellow does stare!" said Kate. Then, seeing how pale her companion had become, she added, "why, Clarice, you are trembling all over, dear! I'm afraid you've been overtaking your strength this morning. I must go and fetch you a glass of wine at once."

Suiting the action to the word, Kate hurried off to obtain it.

Clarice, wringing her hands, murmured bitterly, "Am I never to be at rest? Am I to be punished perpetually for a few moments of anger provoked by ill-treatment when in an instant I committed a—"

Kate hurried in with the wine, which she drank eagerly.

CHAPTER XII.

HER BETTER SELF.

CLARICE ST. QUENTIN sat at her chamber window and wondered what had brought this man on her track to persecute her by his threats and protestations of affection.

"Heaven knows I have enough to conceal, enough to guard, without having him to torment me!"

She looked up at the moon, now sailing bright in the heavens, and then at the sea, on which the moonlight lay like silver sheets; at the stars twinkling like myriads of diamonds; and while she gazed another vision rose in her mind of a lonely snow capped mountain, of a struggle, of a heavy, crushing fall; and then she covered her eyes to shut out the stiff, stark body, with its reproachful eyes staring at her, till the perspiration gathered in beads upon her neck and brow.

"Oh, heavens!" she exclaimed, "can I never forget—never forget? Is there no such thing as Lethe to be found anywhere?"

She moaned aloud in agony. It was almost midnight when she shut down her window and threw herself upon her bed. It was late the next morning when she awoke from a feverish sleep.

Emily came in with her breakfast, and helped the fair invalid to smooth her hair and don her morning wrapper.

Clarice felt very ill and weak, and said, "I have had a very bad night's rest."

The mirrors which lined the apartment reflected two faces that bore a striking resemblance to each other; indeed, so much so, that Clarice turned her head away, so that Emily should not see it also.

Emily, speaking very low, for she did not know how to begin the task she had set herself, managed to say, "I beg your pardon, Mrs. St. Quentin, for intruding upon you a painful subject, but I have heard you know Mr. Sinclair."

"Yes, dear child, I do, very well."

Clarice was calm now as a summer sea; she had control of every nerve and muscle.

"He had a conversation with you yesterday morning."

"You must keep a strict watch upon Mr. Sinclair's doings, Miss Emily; is he anything to you, pray?"

"No; nothing in the world."

"Then why are you so interested in this gentleman?"

"Because he is engaged to my friend Muriel."

Clarice bit her lip, and after a pause, said, "Well, what have I to do with all this? I am not Mr. Sinclair's keeper."

"No; but you can make my friend supremely happy, if you only will. You are so lovely, you cannot but be pure and good. Muriel has only him, while you could win the hearts of many. Why, even a king might lay his crown at your feet! Be noble, be generous, and spare my dear Muriel this bitter trial."

"What would you have me do?"

"Dismiss Mr. Sinclair from your presence," replied Emily, promptly. "Tell him that you can not love him, as he is another's."

"And why should I do this?"

"Why should you do this? Because, if you don't, I fear you will break Muriel Barnett's heart. The angry sea spared you; be merciful to her."

A silence now fell upon them. At length Clarice asked: "Did Miss Barnett know of your coming?"

"No: no one does."

Clarice did not speak again for a moment.

"Suppose I do this for you, will you think of me for it?" she asked.

"If you do this, I will pray for you as long as I live, night and morning."

Tears were gathering in Clarice's eyes as she replied, "I will do this thing—this thing you ask of me. For your sake, mind—for you!"

"God bless you!" exclaimed Emily, catching Clarice's hand, and kissing it fervently. "You are as good as you are beautiful—you are an angel!"

Clarice wound her arms tightly about Emily, and replied, through blinding tears, "Will you always think as well of me, dear? Will you always think of me in the future as more sinned against than sinning? Perhaps, in years to come, enemies of mine may try to poison your mind against me. Will you think of those divine words—'To err is human, to forgive is divine?'"

"If an angel from Heaven were to come and blacken your name, I would not believe it," replied Emily.

With these words, she slowly left the room, and as her footfalls died away, Clarice stood for a moment like a statue of whitest marble there where they had parted, her great blue eyes full of yearning, agonizing light.

"Oh, come back to me, Emily, my child!" she cried at length, through ashen lips. "Come back to me, vision of my own youth and innocence, come back to me!"

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE OR VENGEANCE.

THE glowing autumn day grows fresh toward its close. The sun is sinking. The sea is flecked with many colors, as though it had donned Joseph's coat.

A little rough wind begins to blow over the face of the waters, and the throngs on the beach are beginning to wend their way homeward. Further down the coast is a little inlet inclosed on three sides by rocks and cliffs, and here the water is as yet smooth and undisturbed.

How still and quiet it all is here! Not a sound is heard save the low grugling of the sea as it throbs to and fro. Broad swaths of color are lying on its surface. The rocky cliffs to the right of the inlet are bathed in the last rays of the setting sun.

The village is left behind, and all hushed and still.

In a cavity of one of these rocks stood a man above the middle height, a face of great beauty, although of a demoniacal type; and few could meet the gaze of Sydney Greville's eyes, as they possessed a magic for most women that came across his path. They were eyes that could assume the expression of a Romeo or a Faust.

"Will she play me false by not meeting me? She had better not! Much as I love her, I will sell my soul for revenge should she try to deceive me!" he exclaimed, as he paced the rocky cave, wild with impatience.

Stopping short, he listened intently to a woman's voice.

"I am here. What do you want of me, Sydney Greville? Why do you not leave me alone in my misery? When is it all to end?"

"When women are not false as fair!" His voice was hard and cold. "You are devoid of memory, I see, as well as heart!"

"Why have you come here? What do you want of me?"

"I want your love and my heart's peace; and if I cannot obtain it, then I want vengeance! There is no trifling now, Clarice; I am desperate!"

"How dare you talk to me like this?"

"You know how shamefully you have wronged me, and when you so cruelly left me so ill in that Swiss chalet, with your dreadful secret festering in my heart! Did you think that was no wrong to me? I have come to claim my reward!"

"I've no time to waste here, Mr. Greville, to listen to what is to me a very old and tedious story; and I want you to understand that if you do not cease to persecute me, I shall have to use unpleasant means."

"You will, eh?"

"Yes, I will."

And Clarice was about to leave the spot, when Greville laid his hand heavily upon her arm.

"No, Clarice; you shall not leave me like that! I have not done with you yet! Ah, you tremble now, but you will tremble a little more yet if you do not accede to my wishes!"

Clarice was sick with fright; and while her breath came in hard gasps, her cheeks blanched with dread as she met the eyes which glared with fury.

"Well, tell me what you wish me to do?"

"Become my wife," he hissed in to her ear, "and let the dead bury their dead! Why do you shrink from me with such fear? Am I not mortal? Am I so ill-favored in your eyes? Have I not kept your secret bravely, when a word from me would hurl you from your position to herd with felons, or perchance to suffer a worse fate still?"

She was silent from conviction that he had certainly some claim on her consideration.

"Why cannot you love me? Does not my conduct prove that I am passionately devoted to you? Without you life is purposeless! I fail in my engagements, and am drifting out to sea, where all is grim despair! Before I knew you and your fatal secret life was bright and hopeful! The public caressed me! I was the idol of the hour! Fortune smiled on me, and I was happy! What am I now? And what I am you have made me!"

The waves washed with mysterious noises, as if to hush by their gentle cadence and soft lullaby the passions which were raging in the breasts of two human beings. In his passionate pleading he seized her wrist, and gripped it so tight that, unable to bear any longer the pain, she screamed aloud for mercy. An answering shout came like a voice from heaven to reassure her.

Alarmed for his safety, Greville released her, and entering a boat, rowed swiftly from the spot.

CHAPTER XIV.

HALF-CONFESSIONS.

THE answering cry that Clarice heard was uttered by Basil Maitland, who, engrossed by his own thoughts, and absorbed by his love for Emily, had sauntered along the beach, straying idly, purposelessly, as he drew bright pictures of future happiness and fame, she being the foremost object in each.

"Who's there?" he asked. "Surely I heard a cry?"

"'Tis Basil!" Clarice muttered, hurriedly, as she shrunk further back into the darkness, resolved not to answer his question.

He entered and peered about, trying to pierce the surrounding gloom, and at last his hand came into contact with Clarice's arm.

Her mind was made up on the instant, and she resolved to put him off the scent in respect of her identity, as discovery might lead to unpleasant results, and provoke the tongue of slander.

"I am better now, sir," she said, in a feigned voice, almost as soon as he had touched her. "I was terrified by a bat or a bird; I know not which."

"I am so pleased to hear it is nothing more," he replied. "Permit me to be your escort?"

"I thank you very much for your offer, but I cannot leave, as I am waiting for some friends, whom I expect every minute."

"It is to be hoped they will come very soon, madam, as this is a dangerous spot, and the tide is fast coming in. However, I will leave you. I should not have intruded had I not thought you were in danger."

He bowed and walked away, to her infinite relief.

She hastened home as fast as possible, and gained her room without exciting the observation of any one.

She had just changed her dress for an evening robe, and obliterated all traces of agitation from her face, when Kate bounded into the room, and exclaimed: "Well, this is a treat, dear Clarice! I have not been up to disturb you before, seeing that your door was closed. How charming you look! You must have been indulging in a long *siesta*, and you ought to be grateful to me for having left you alone so long. They have sent me up especially for you. How on earth did you manage to get yourself up so well without any help? Why, I declare you will cut us all out!"

"Cease your flattery, Kate. You will make me quite vain. Who is down-stairs?"

"Oh, colonel, Mrs. Barnett, Muriel, Emily, Mr. Basil Maitland, Doctor Arden and his daughter, who sings like an angel, and is such a dear little thing. Then there's our friend, Harry Sinclair; and last, but not least, my charming self, at your service."

"But where is Captain Dawtry?" asked Clarice.

A shade of sorrow passed over the mobile features of Kate as she stammered: "Oh, he has been called away suddenly. But there! I don't know anything about it."

Clarice, looking her steadily in the face remarked: "I fear you know more than you care to admit, dear, and that the poor fellow has left something behind him which you possess."

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. It is his heart you have stolen."

"Oh, dear Clarice, don't jest; for, indeed, I am not to blame in this case. I know I have played with men's hearts, but I never did with his."

"I believe you, dear." And she sealed her words with a kiss. "But come; they will think we are lost."

They entered the drawing-room with linked arms, presenting charming pictures of beauty in perfect contrast with each other, and of such perfect types as to be rarely met with in such close conjunction.

One hardly knew which to choose—Clarice, fair as a lily, with golden hair and a sylph-like form, or Bonnie Kate, the perfection of a brunette, in her sweeping robe of violet velvet, displaying her lovely bust and arms, which seemed chiseled out of marble.

Clarice's face wore an expression of languor, which heightened the interest most of those present felt in her, especially Doctor Arden, who was under the same spell that she invariably cast over the men with whom she came into contact, and especially those who had known her for any lengthened period.

Among the list of her victims were Lord Sherbrooke, Harry Sinclair, Sydney Greville, and even sober-sided Colonel Barnett, who, although years had passed since he had wooed her as a lover, now felt a return of the tender feeling and a relapse of his old malady.

Colonel Barnett was passionately fond of music, and never felt happier than when listening to the cultivated voices of friends, about whose capabilities he was quite a connoisseur.

Several songs had been sung, when he approached Clarice, and with a most winning smile asked her to favor them with a ballad.

"Sing me," he said, "one I have often had the pleasure of hearing from you before. I mean 'Love's Request.' Please afford me the pleasure, for the sake of 'auld lang syne.'"

Clarice granted his wish, and sung "Love's Request" in so touching and yet in such a brilliant style that every one in the room was filled with pleasure and surprise.

Harry Sinclair turned over her music with a trembling hand as she sung those touching words:

"Canst thou thus unmoved behold me,
Still untouched by love so deep?
May my arms more close infold thee,
And mine eyes begin to weep?
Stay with me, my darling, stay,
And like a dream thy life shall pass away."

As she finished the last line, a hushed silence fell upon the listeners, and Sinclair's eyes were moist with tears—a fact unobserved by all but Emily, who kept a strict watch on all his actions.

No persuasion could induce Clarice to sing again that evening.

She retired to a seat in the window, the ample curtains of which made a refuge, and she felt pleased to be alone with her thoughts.

She was not a little vexed to find that Doctor Arden seated himself deliberately beside her, with the evident intention of remaining.

Clarice was obliged to answer his courteous inquiries about her health, and pleaded a headache as an excuse for sitting away from the others.

"You still seem very weak," he said, in a gentle tone. "I fear this little dissipation has not agreed with you; but I can quite understand that the sad loss you have sustained has a great deal to do with this feeling of lassitude."

"Yes; you are right. This being my first evening since his death, it all seems very strange; and although there are only about a dozen people in the room, I feel as if I were in a large crowd."

"No one, my dear madam, could sympathize more with your loss than I have myself. Mr. St. Quentin was an old and valued friend of mine, though it is some years since we last met. You, I presume, are the widow of his only son, Edward?"

"Did you know my husband, then?" she asked, eagerly.

"For three years I saw him daily. That was before his father returned from abroad."

Her eyes sparkled now, as she rejoined:

"Was not he very handsome?"

"Yes; he was a fine manly fellow, and I loved him as a son. He had but one serious fault, and that was an uncontrollable temper, which led him into many errors and caused the estrangement between himself and father, which, I regret to say, was never healed. It is a great matter of wonder to me that you are still a widow."

She was pulling a blush rose to pieces as she answered, "I have no desire to fill the vacancy in my heart that Edward's death occasioned."

"Do you mean to tell me that you will never marry again?"

"Yes," she replied, with great earnestness; "I mean to say that I will never, never marry again!"

A silence fell upon them now; the last of the rose-leaves fluttered to her feet.

"You surprise me," he said finally.

"I don't understand you."

"Neither can I understand that a woman formed to be adored, to excite admiration and love, could live on the memory of a past affection."

"You forget, doctor, that I loved him very dearly."

"Your union was of very short duration, though. His death was very sudden, and I never heard the rights of it quite. He was precipitated into a ravine, was he not?"

She darted a quick glance at him, her heart standing still, but he was looking out of the window with a listless air, and did not notice the pallor that overspread her face, as she replied, in a dazed tone: "Yes, he was. We quarreled—he fell—But, oh!"—and she clutched his hand—"I have been dreaming! What have I been saying?"

At this moment Lord Sherbrooke was announced.

CHAPTER XV.

A BLACK HEART.

"A FRIEND of ours, colonel," said Kate Manton. "Allow me to introduce him. Lord Sherbrooke—Colonel Barnett."

The sight of her friend and admirer restored Clarice's composure and excusing herself to the doctor, she rose and welcomed his lordship.

Taking her hand, he led her to a secluded corner of the room.

"My darling Clarice, I cannot tell you how pained and grieved I have been to hear of the sad loss you have sustained. You look as fragile as a lily. I have so longed for this hour, to be near you—to comfort you, if you will permit me."

"I thank you from my heart, my lord; but I fear that not even you will be able to accomplish that task. I have very much changed since I last saw you. I have passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and the dark memory of all I have suffered has cast a gloom over my life that no one on earth can ever dispel."

"You think so now, Clarice, because your mind is imbued with what you have passed through! You need change of scene, and must leave this place at once. Oh, darling Clarice, give me the right, as my dear wife, to take you to sunnier and brighter climes, where it shall be one perpetual summer, and where my devotion will chase every cloud from your brow!"

"Cyril, cease this; 'tis persecution! If you really do love me, blot it out of your heart, for I am not worthy of you! There are fairer and truer women that would love you, and whom you could honor! Cast me from your life from this night, and believe me when I tell you that it will be the best for your happiness and your untarnished name!"

"Say no more, Clarice; you are put out! Your words sound so strange!"

They were interrupted by the voice of Emily, who came up to ask Clarice her opinion of a red transparent piece of stone, which she firmly believed was coral.

Holding it up to view, she said: "What is your opinion, Mrs. St. Quentin? You shall be judge. They are all laughing at me, and saying it is only a common bit of stone."

Both Lord Sherbrooke and Clarice were of the opinion that it was a piece of cornelian.

"Then we are all in the wrong!" said Emily, laughingly.

All at once her bantering was dropped, and she cast down her eyes, abashed and confused, beneath the earnest gaze of Lord Sherbrooke.

When she left them, Lord Sherbrooke exclaimed: "Who is that girl? Why, she is the living image of yourself, Clarice! If you were old enough to have a child of her age, I should say she was your own flesh and blood."

"Yes, she is very like me," she replied, intimating, at the same time, that she wished to join her friends.

Lord Sherbrooke, feeling tired, pleaded fatigue, and retired at an early hour to his hotel. In reality, he was almost dazed by the terrible ordeal he had passed through. On finding himself alone, he threw himself in a chair, and began to think, as was not his wont.

Until he knew Clarice, and loved her, he had lived for the hour only, and had sipped the sweets of society idly and pleasantly. But she had stirred his heart to its innermost depths, and made him her humble slave. He had met women fairer and grander far than she, and had passed through the ordeal safely. There was a witchery, a charm about her, which he could not resist. He could not charge her with any attempt to ensnare his affection. Since he had met Emily, and noticed how like she was to Clarice, it made him thoughtful. He was trying to solve the problem of her decided refusal of his suit. He was well-born, rich, and attractive in every way, yet she refused him. There was a mystery in all this to him, and he was of opinion that Emily was somehow mixed up in it.

His reverie was interrupted by the entrance of his valet, who presented a card bearing the name of Mr. Greville.

"The gentleman says he wishes to see you on important business."

To distract his thoughts from Clarice, he consented to see the visitor, who was accordingly ushered into his presence.

"I must apologize to your lordship," he said, "for my seeming intrusion, and before I venture upon disclosing certain matters which will prove of interest to you, I must bind you to secrecy in some measure."

"If I mistake not," said Lord Sherbrooke, "you are Mr. Greville, the famous singer?"

He bowed at the compliment, and replied:

"If my fame has reached you, I am content. My business relates to Mrs. St. Quentin."

"I decline to discuss anything relating to her with you, who are a perfect stranger to me, and possibly to the lady herself."

"She is no stranger to me," he said, almost fiercely. "She met me on the sands only last night."

"What she does is nothing to me. Are you acting as a man in thus betraying her confidence?"

"I am here to put you on your guard. Would you like to ally yourself with a murderer?"

Lord Sherbrooke almost bounded from his chair, and confronted the speaker with fierce anger blazing in his eyes.

"How dare you?" he said, hoarsely. "Do you know the fearful nature of the charge that you would bring against a lady whom I respect highly?"

"Say whom you love, rather. I have no wish to be offensive in my remarks; but it is better that you of all men should learn the truth before it's too late."

"What is your object in coming to me?"

"I have already said—to warn you."

"And what do you expect to gain?"

"Nothing but revenge."

"And you wish me to help you?"

"I can do that for myself. It is high time that she should be presented to society and the world in her true colors. I have my price, which, if paid, will silence me forever."

"Sir," said his lordship, "there is the door—go!"

"You will be sorry for this; for when I do leave, I shall go straight to the police and denounce her as the murderer of her late husband! Then, if you like to have your name mixed up with hers, and to stand forth as her champion in open court, you have more nerve than most men!"

"You must be mad!"

"I wish to Heaven I was! This terrible secret has blighted my life! Another fact I can acquaint you of—Emily Duncan is her daughter!"

"I half suspected that myself. What motive can she have in denying the relationship?"

"What motive could she have in pushing her husband over the precipice? Simply to rid herself of an incubus, and to become the possessor of his father's wealth. You thought to win her, little dreaming that her heart has been given to another, who is now living under the same roof, and who is engaged to his cousin, Muriel Barnett!"

Astonishment kept Lord Sherbrooke silent.

"You see," continued Greville, "that I do not speak lightly. I can prove the truth of every statement I have made to you, and mean to do so. Secure in her position, she has dared to defy me; but now I mean to submit to her arrogance and pride no longer. She shall taste of all the bitterness she has caused me, and drink the cup of shame to the very dregs!"

"I am powerless to save her," said his lordship. "She may be innocent, and, in a moment of passion, have been guilty of the fearful charge you bring against her. If you wish, she shall see you in my presence and have a

chance of refuting your calumnies, for I do not, nay, cannot, believe her guilty."

"I will keep any appointment that you may see fit to make. You have my address. I shall not leave Cohasset until I hear from you."

He left the young lord in a state of bewilderment bordering on madness. If what Greville said was true, he had wasted his heart's affections upon a worse than a mere adventurer.

But even yet he clung to the belief that Clarice was more sinned against than sinning; that she would come out of the ordeal as pure as snow and be the idol of his heart still.

Greville spoke of a price: he would have it in his undying hate; he would crush him under foot, and make him feel that in persecuting Clarice he had made a wrong move.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CRISIS.

At about the same time this interview was occurring at Lord Sherbrooke's hotel, Harry Sinclair and Clarice were seated on a rock on the sea-shore, with the waves leaping playfully at their feet and the sun shining brightly, lighting up sea and shore with its radiance.

"I cannot bear this suspense any longer," said Sinclair. "It is killing me slowly."

"Bear!" she said, with a scornful curve of her lip. "It is I who should complain of bearing a heavy burden."

"Think of Muriel," he said, "and of the light in which she and others must view my conduct! I long to break the galling chains that bind me to her, but dare not until you promise to be mine."

"Have patience. Shall I tell you a story of a woman's life?"

"Would it interest me?"

"I think so."

"As you please," he replied, moodily watching the waves, which, like his hopes, seemed to reach the shore only to recede.

"Picture to yourself a young girl with some claims to beauty, full of life and energy and very impressionable. It was a time of love and roses for her, and she had suitors enough and to spare; she married against her father's wishes and went to Cuba. There her husband died, leaving her with a child to face the world. She lacked not friends, and, big with hope, returned to her New England home only to find her father dead, her friends cold and distant. One night, in the north, when frost and snow held the earth in its icy grasp, she was caught in a storm. Weary and footsore, and with the burden of her child dragging her down, she knocked for admittance, and found shelter in the humble abode of a fisherman."

"Do I know the person to whom this story refers?" Sinclair asked.

"Wait and see. Shall I go on?"

"Yes; I'm beginning to feel interested."

"While in that humble abode a terrible temptation assailed her. She was young, and men called her beautiful, but, in spite of her charms and accomplishments, would the world open its doors to a struggling widow and her child? Arising stealthily, she penned a hasty note, begging the hospitable couple to befriend her child, promising to claim it when things were brighter. The first act of her life's drama ended there."

"Did she ever claim her offspring?" Sinclair asked.

"Have patience; let me tell the story in my own way."

"I shall not interrupt again," he remarked.

"Fortune smiled upon her. She was wooed and won again; this time, not for love did she marry, but for a home. She sent sums of money for her child's maintenance, but gave no clew of her identity. Years passed, and she would have been happy but for the jealous temper of her husband. They were traveling in the Alps in company with a celebrated singer, whose fame was world-wide. He paid her attention, which, out of pique, she did not repel. During a halt at a chalet she and her

husband were strolling near the edge of a precipice. He reproached her with light conduct in connection with their fellow-traveler. Retort followed retort, and in his blind fury he struck her, and would have killed her if she had not fought for her life. In desperation, she pushed him from her, not knowing, or, perhaps, caring, that the treacherous earth would crumble under his feet. He fell over, and she swooned. Thus ended the second act of the drama."

"Did she marry the singer?"

"No; he became a thorn in her side. He had seen the fatal occurrence, and began from thenceforward to persecute her. He is following her now."

"Clarice," said Sinclair, "you are telling me the story of your own life."

"I did not say it was mine."

"I read the truth in your eyes! Why not confide in me? Love such as mine cannot be lessened, because circumstances over which you have no control led you to do things which your nature abhors. Who is this enemy?"

"It is I!" said a man's voice.

Sydney Greville stood before them, his face full of vindictive hate. He had listened to her story, played the part of eavesdropper as he crouched under the rocks, heard Sinclair's impassioned declaration, and was determined to bring matters to a crisis.

Clarice screamed slightly as Sinclair leaped to the sands and stood before the man who openly declared himself the enemy of the woman he loved so dearly.

"You mean hound; you despicable wretch, to take advantage of a woman; to hound her to destruction, because, in a moment of weakness, she led her husband to believe that she cared for you!"

Greville sprang at his throat. They struggled as only men can whose purpose is murderous.

She sat dazed, helpless, unable to speak or move, her tongue glued to the roof of her mouth.

Suddenly Lord Sherbrooke, who had been looking for Clarice, appeared on the scene.

"Sinclair, in Heaven's name, what does this mean?" he cried, as he stood over the prostrate form of Greville, whom he had thrown heavily.

"Do not interfere, my lord; this quarrel is mine!"

"Have you no respect for Mrs. St. Quentin? Come, come, Sinclair, control yourself!"

"Not until he promises to leave her alone. He is unfit to live!"

By this time Clarice had recovered her composure, and joined her entreaties to those of Lord Sherbrooke.

"My lord," said Greville, as he rose from his humiliating position; "I withdraw my offer of a compromise. The law shall take its course."

Turning to Sinclair, upon whose arm Clarice's hand rested, he said, "We shall meet again when you least expect it."

He strolled from the spot, leaving the trio in a state of mind that is better imagined than described.

"Mrs. St. Quentin," said Lord Sherbrooke, coldly, "I must apologize for having intruded upon you, but I was actuated by motives of friendship. Mr. Greville has made certain statements to me with which you ought to be acquainted."

"I am in his power, I acknowledge; but before Heaven I swear I am innocent of the foul crime he lays to my charge!"

"I am not your accuser, but your friend. Good-day; if I can be of any service to you, rely upon me!"

"Do not go, my lord!" she pleaded; "the present is the time for action. I think more of the opinion of yourself as a true friend than of that of the world! Will you advise me what to do? Shall I leave Cohasset, or stay to face the odious charge which my enemy would—nay, will prefer against me?"

"The matter requires consideration," he replied. "Pardon me; are you wise in mentioning these matters before a third party?"

"I know all, my lord," said Sinclair, "and

will stand by her to the last—ay, even at the cost of life itself!"

"Hush!" said the other; "people approach."

Kate Manton and Emily Duncan raced across the sands, full of spirits.

"Ah, truants!" exclaimed Kate; "so we have found you at last!" Then, perceiving how silent they were, she said:

"What is the matter, Clarice?"

"Oh, I am utterly wretched!" she cried, as she threw her arms round Kate's neck, and wept bitterly.

"Hush, my darling; you have over-fatigued yourself, and will be better presently."

"Shall I procure a conveyance?" said Emily, in a tone full of deep sympathy.

Clarice raised her head, and cast a yearning look at the girl whom she had deserted, and on whose pure young breast she would have liked to rest her weary head.

"Come, Sinclair," said Lord Sherbrooke; "we must not let Miss Duncan remind us how remiss we have been."

Linking his arm, he led him away, to give Clarice a chance of recovering her composure.

"What has happened?" Kate asked. "Has anybody been unkind to you?"

"No, not unkind, but cruel!" she sobbed, wringing her hands. "Oh, Emily, I am afraid you will never forgive me!"

There was such anguish in her tone, that it struck a chill to the hearts of her hearers.

"Dear Mrs. St. Quentin, do not say that," Emily replied. "You have not harmed me in any way."

Holding forth her arms, Emily was folded in them as she cried:

"My child, my child!"

Before she could say more, Lord Sherbrooke approached in one direction, and Greville, with a constable, in the other.

"I charge this woman with the murder of her husband! Constable, do your duty!"

"Hold!" cried Sherbrooke. "This is a matter for the consideration of a magistrate. The crime which he alleges she committed took place in Switzerland, and is unsupported by any other testimony than his. Here is my card. I will be responsible for her appearance at the proper moment."

"Beg pardon, my lord," said the constable; "this is too serious a matter for me to decide upon myself. If the lady will accompany you and this gentleman to the court-room, I will follow on, and see the sheriff about the matter."

"The lady has fainted," said his lordship. "If you will oblige me by coming to my hotel it would be the better course."

"I am very sorry, my lord, but it is more than I dare do."

Lord Sherbrooke bit his lips with vexation, and Kate said, "I will go with my friend. It is a foul conspiracy. Her innocence will be proved!" And turning on Greville, she said, with flashing eyes, "As for you, you black-hearted wretch, you shall be hooted and execrated wherever you go!"

He only sneered as he stood with folded arms enjoying the hour of triumph over a woman whose only fault was that she had rejected his advances.

Emily, who had silently watched the proceedings, now said, "To make a charge of this kind is one thing, sir; to prove it, another. If the whole world should hold her guilty, I would still believe her innocent!"

Clarice had recovered consciousness by this time, and a smile of pleasure settled on her face as she listened to Emily's words.

"I am better now," she said faintly, "and am ready to go wherever you wish to take me."

"Courage, dear Clarice!" whispered Cyril. "I am near you, and will see you through this trying ordeal. Deny the charge, and leave the rest to me."

He assisted her into the hack; Kate and Emily followed, and accompanied by Cyril, the party was driven to the little jail.

Luckily all this had happened at an unfre-

quented spot, and passed off without attracting public attention.

On the representation of Lord Sherbrooke, the sheriff allowed Clarice to go at large until the charge would be decided.

Greville said, "I insist upon her being placed under surveillance. If she escapes you will be placed in a serious dilemma."

"I am willing to take the responsibility," was the quiet reply, "and would be exceeding my duty if I acceded to your demand; nor do I wish you, sir, to teach me my duty!"

On reaching home, Doctor Arden was sent for to attend Clarice, who was taken seriously ill, and became quite delirious. It was impossible to keep the matter from Colonel Barnett, who was shocked and grieved on hearing of it. She called piteously for Emily, who never left her side the whole night. Clarice fell into a gentle sleep at last, Emily's hand clasped in both of hers.

CHAPTER XVII.

TRIUMPH AND HUMILIATION.

BOB HARTFORD and his father journeyed to Cohasset to bid Emily good-by ere starting for the Far West.

"Dang it, lad," said the old man, "I do not much like going among such fine folk. Ever since you've known that grand young lady, Miss Barnett, you have been building castles in the air, and wasting pen, ink, and paper, like the very dickens."

"I won't work the less hard for trying to become a scholar, father, so don't be alarmed."

"Bless her dear heart! I allus said as how Emily would turn out a spic and span lady; I could see it in her when she was quite a baby, in the way she ate her pap and kept her things so tidy, and was so pleasant like, smiling, and laughing, and crowing—not a bit like you, sir, for you were one of the most outrageous babies in the world." After a pause, he continued, "I have an idea that I will meet Emily's mother. Bless you, I could pick her out of a thousand! And won't I give her a bit of my mind when I do see her, a-gallivanting about the country, and a-leaving her little darling to be brought up by such humble folks as we! But, thank God, we did our duty by her; and spent every penny upon her that was sent us, and more, too."

"That you did, father," Bob remarked; "and she does you credit."

"And allus will, my lad. Bless you, it 'u'd make no difference to Jasper Hartford if she turned out a empress! I should allus claim a father's privilege, and kiss her and call her my dear darter, just for the sake of old times, you know."

The garrulous old man did nothing but talk about her, much to the discomfiture of Bob, who wanted all his thoughts for Muriel.

They arrived at Cohasset at last, and after they refreshed and made themselves tidy, they set out for Barnett's address.

On their way they passed by the county jail, and saw Basil Maitland standing outside. After greeting them, he said:

"You will find no one at home; they are all inside."

"Then let us go inside and see them," said Jasper at once, elbowing his way through the crowd.

Basil and Bob followed, and saw their friends grouped round Clarice, who was looking pale, but calm.

Greville was giving his account of the murder, and entering into the minutest details of the circumstances.

"I am also aware," he said, "that she once had a child; having committed one murder, she would not stickle at another."

"Hold on, there!" cried Jasper. "I don't know what you're talking about exactly, but if you're alluding to my little Emily there, all I can say is that she hasn't been murdered! That lady"—pointing to Clarice—"left the child with me when it was quite an infant."

Lord bless you, I know her! She didn't wear such fine clothes then, but it's her all the same."

This caused quite a commotion in court, and it was some time before they could obtain silence.

"Was the body found?" the magistrate asked.

"I believe not," said Greville.

"Don't you think that strange?"

"Not at all. It might have fallen into a crevice or lodged in a tree."

"But was the matter inquired into out there?"

"No, sir."

"Why?"

"To own the truth, I advised the prisoner—"

"I beg your pardon," said the magistrate; "this is an inquiry. The lady has not yet been taken into custody. When I interrupted you, you were about to make a statement; pray proceed."

"I advised Mrs. St. Quentin to say nothing about the matter."

"What was your motive?"

"Friendship for her."

"And yet, after a lapse of years, you bring this serious charge against her?"

"I had a public duty to perform."

"Do you know that you have been an accessory after the fact?"

Turning to Clarice, the magistrate said: "What have you to say to the charge?"

"I am innocent. It was an accident, and but for this man's advice, the matter would have been investigated on the spot at the time. Ever since he has traded on my fears, and extorted large sums of money from me, and persecuted me with attentions that have been odious. I now court a full investigation, and require nothing so much as to have my character cleared."

Great applause followed her simple speech, which bore the ring of truth in it.

"I must lay the facts before a higher court. Meanwhile, madam, you will be bound over in your own recognizances of one thousand dollars, and will find two sureties in five hundred dollars each, to appear when called upon."

Lord Sherbrooke and Colonel Barnett offered themselves, and were accepted. This ended the case.

Greville as he left the court, full of rage and mortification at his discomfiture, was hissed. Clarice was escorted home by a troop of friends, among whom were Bob and his father.

"Dang it all!" said the old man; "I knowed as how I'd meet her, but I didn't think, of all places, it would be in a jail-house!"

They said a hasty farewell to Emily and their other friends, and left, but not before Bob had had an opportunity of saying a few words to Muriel in private. His words were simple, but his eyes spoke volumes of deep love and adoration.

"You will write to me sometimes, Mr. Hartford?" Muriel said.

"Yes, often, Miss Barnett."

His heart was too full to say more, and she parted from him with the kindest feelings and expressions of good-will and sincere wishes for his prosperity.

Now that Emily knew that Clarice was her mother, and that she was in sore trouble, her young heart went out to her. She had no time to feel sad for the parting which had just taken place, and which, under other circumstances, would have moved her deeply. Her newly-found mother engrossed all her attention, and she never left her side for a moment during the whole of that trying day.

"I am rightly punished!" sighed Clarice. "If I had not deserted you when you were a helpless infant, and consigned you to the care of strangers, I should not have had this bitter trial."

"Do not say so, dear mother! Let it console you to know that you left me in good hands."

"Where are your benefactors, my darling?"

"Gone."

"So soon? But they will return to receive my thanks?"

"Some day, perhaps, dear mother, they may."

"They despise me!"

"No, no; they would not be so unjust. They have gone to the West to carve out a fortune for themselves."

"But I would have given them one. We must be kind to them, Emily, and bring them back soon. You shall write to them, and ask them how I can serve them. And now tell me, darling, are you heart-whole? Has not Mr. Maitland found a place in it?"

Emily blushed and was silent, and then, seeing a look of pain on her mother's face, she hastened to say, "I have no wish to forsake you, mother dear. I will stay with you always, to comfort you with my love. Believe me, this dark cloud will soon pass away, and leave you brighter and happier."

"Do you think your friend Muriel loves Mr. Sinclair? I have a motive in asking the question."

"I can hardly answer for her, nor, indeed, do I think it would be right in me to do so; but if you were to ask me if he loves her, I could say no without doing him an injustice."

"And yet he is not a bad man, Emily."

"Pray do not discuss him, dear mother; but try and compose yourself."

"You will not leave me?" she pleaded.

"No; see, here comes the doctor. I had better leave you for a little while. When he has gone I will return."

"How do you find yourself by this time, dear madam?" Doctor Arden asked. "Better, I hope?"

"Not much," she said, with a sigh. "I cannot hope to be better while I labor under such a dreadful charge."

"What was the date of the—accident? In asking the question, I am not actuated by mere curiosity."

"By a strange coincidence, it was four years ago this very day!"

"Are you sure? Pray excuse my persistence."

"Quite; it was also the anniversary of our wedding-day."

"Well, one of the most marvelous things has happened that I have ever heard of or remembered. Prepare yourself to hear good news. In searching among my letters, I found this. It is dated from South America, three months after the time named."

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed. "I am entirely innocent, and can now meet my Maker with a clear conscience. But, oh! it was cruel of him to keep me in ignorance—to allow me to suppose that he died on that dreadful day. Will you see Colonel Barnett and Lord Sherbrooke and have my innocence proved beyond a doubt?"

"Certainly I will. It is my duty as well as a pleasure to do so. It shall be seen to at once."

"Thank you. May I ask you another favor?"

"Do so by all means, and if in my power, consider it already granted."

"Have you heard from him since?"

"I regret to say I have not."

"Could you discover later news of him?"

"I will try by writing this very day to a common friend."

"How can I ever repay you for your great kindness?"

"By getting well soon. You see, there is a silver lining to every cloud, dear lady. You have been given back a dear daughter, and I trust a long-lost husband at the same time. Good-by; I shall look in again later on."

A silent prayer escaped the stricken woman's lips for the mercies which had been vouchsafed her.

She could look the world in the face again and defy Greville.

The one bitter ingredient in the cup of her happiness was the thought of her love for Harry Sinclair. It was sinful now, but still

she clung to it, although conscience whispered in that still, small voice which makes itself heard amid the storm of passions.

"Oh, my love, my love! how can I give you up?" she murmured. "It will break my heart; I cannot do it! Oh, Harry, why did we ever meet?"

Her delicate fingers covered her eyes, and she saw not Muriel, who had stolen in to sit for awhile at her bedside.

The color came and went in the young girl's face as she listened to these passionate words, and gathered their import.

"Mrs. St. Quentin—Clarice—I am here, and have overheard what I already knew. I do not wish to keep him; do not fret."

Clarice raised herself with a start, and holding out her arms beseechingly, said: "Forgive me, sweet girl! I loved him when I knew not he was engaged to you; now I, too, must give him up. He can be no longer mine; my husband still lives!"

Sinclair had come to the door to pay the invalid a visit, and overheard these words, which fell like a funeral knell upon his heart. Regardless of appearances, or of the presence of Muriel, he rushed forward, and throwing himself on his knees before the idol of his heart, whose eyes looked at him with such a tender, yearning expression, he cried, "My love, my all, my darling, I cannot give you up! Let love plead for me! I can no more help loving you than I can help breathing in the air or drinking in the sunshine! Have pity—have mercy!"

"Hush! be a man. The sacrifice, for all our sakes, must be made. Do you not see who is present?"

"Yes, yes; but I would proclaim my love for you to the whole world! How can it be possible that any human heart can find room for another love when it is so full, so overflowing with love for you, my darling! Muriel will pardon me! I know I have wronged her; but she is young, and the world is before her, and she will find worthier, better men than I to bestow her heart upon!"

"My poor Harry," said Muriel; "I freely forgive you, but can never look upon you in any other light than that of a cousin. It was a sore thought at first your desertion; but I am reconciled to it now, and so are my parents. We cannot force love; nor would I wish to do so if I could. You will have to bear your punishment. Do so bravely, and you must win in the end."

"Who is this man that would come between us, Clarice?" he said, hoarsely. "He left you to suffer with a frightful imputation hanging over your head; left you free to love again; and now that your heart's affections have been given to me, must you, at the bidding of Society, return to him who could never have loved you, or he would not have treated you as he has."

"Do not harrow my feelings!" she pleaded. "Heaven knows I have suffered sufficiently! I must be strong! If it should turn out that I am free I will give myself up to you! Be content; I ask it for the great love you bear me; for the sake of my honor and dignity as well as for that of my child."

He covered his face with his hands and groaned aloud.

"Would you have had her blush for me at a moment when holy joy fills her heart—when for the first time in her young life she has felt a mother's clinging arms about her? It would be cruel and wrong!"

"You are right!" he said. "Forgive me, Clarice; I will leave you and go abroad out of your way, and wait patiently until you can call me back to you with honor."

"Harry, you have spoken nobly, bravely, and I respect you—nay, honor you for your self-command! Such nobility of soul can only be the outcome of true love. I shall never cease to love you, Harry!" said Clarice. "You have made me very happy, and given me back honor—nay, fresh life itself!"

Covering her hand with passionate kisses, he

turned to Muriel, and said, "Good-by! Will you explain my sudden departure? I cannot write to your father, but will do so later on."

Hardly had he left when Doctor Arden entered, with a face expressive of good news, and holding in his hand an open letter.

"The lost has been found!" he said, gayly. "This letter will explain all."

She took it, and read as follows:

"MY DEAR OLD FRIEND:—

"Tired of my wandering life, I will return to New York, and will pay my first visit to you. So you may expect me any day."

"By the way, I wonder whether you will be able to give me any information of the whereabouts of my wife. I wrote her once from the forests of South America, but whether she received it I cannot say. Excuse this hasty scrawl, and believe me,

"Your true old friend,

"EDWARD ST. QUENTIN."

"P. S.—Just drop a line to poor old dad to say I am coming. I know he is fond of traveling. It will save time if you do this."

"E. S. Q."

There was no joy, no love in Clarice's eyes, as she read the missive that told her of her husband's return.

It seemed to her profanation to say that her affection for him was unchanged. How could she perform her wifely duties, how return his caresses, when her heart beat only for another?

It was alike her hour of triumph and of bitter humiliation, and the tears welled from her eyes as she thought of Harry, banished from her and from his dear old home, simply because he had given her his love, thinking her a free woman.

There was one consoling thought in all this misery.

Cyril would be cured of his mad infatuation for her, and turn, as she hoped, to Kate, who loved him, and would make him a true wife.

Muriel had left the room, and now the doctor stole softly out, not caring to look upon the sorrowing woman who within one short day had passed through such fiery ordeals.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

Now that the fact of her husband being alive was incontestably proved, the magisterial investigation ceased, and in open court Clarice was publicly exonerated.

Greville disappeared, or he would have received very rough treatment for the villainous part he had played in the transaction.

But though foiled, he resolved to have his revenge.

Clarice, as the days went by, became a happier woman, although she looked forward with foreboding to the coming of her husband.

Emily was all the world to her now, and in loving words and caresses she strove to make amends for her past desertion of her.

When she looked at the beautiful girl, and saw there the image of her own girlhood, a gush of tenderness, a thrill of joy passed through her heart, such as had found no place there for many a year. She had schemed and almost sinned to raise herself to a high pinnacle of wealth and station, and had reached it. But, like the apples of Sodom and Gomorrah, they had turned to bitter ashes in her mouth. The only thing she had despised and rejected was now the chief source of her joy and consolation. She shuddered to think what the consequences might have been had Emily, owing to the force of circumstances, contracted a *mesalliance*.

She had proved truer to her mother than she herself had to her, and her love for her child was thereby increased tenfold.

One lovely morning she lay on a couch with the soft sea breezes blowing in through the open window, bringing with them health and strength to her enfeebled frame, and with the sweet scent of rare flowers perfuming the air, as she waited for the coming of Cyril Sherbrooke.

He came, looking the picture of manly beauty and vigor, his face lit up with smiles to

greet her, although his heart was still sore at the thought of having lost her forever.

He was schooling himself bravely, and had resolved that not another word of love should pass his lips.

After a preliminary greeting, she motioned him to a chair at her side, and taking his hand, said, gently, "I have sent for you to speak of a matter which is very near my heart, and concerns your happiness and that of another."

"I am pleased that you feel such interest in me, and that, amid your own troubles, you can spare time to think of my unworthy self."

"Can I ever forget you, dear friend," she said, gently, "or the many happy hours we have passed together? And now let me plead as a woman for a woman."

They were both silent for a time. She was the first to speak.

"I hardly know how to begin," she said; "but I cannot see you lose the priceless treasure of a woman's love, when it is yours for the asking. I may be, and no doubt am, overstepping the bounds of propriety. Will you pray forgive me?"

"You have committed no offense," he said, with a sweet smile.

"Kate loves you, but not for worlds would she wish this avowal to come from other lips. Do not throw away your chance of happiness. I plead as a sister who would save you from the quicksands of life. You are too noble not to be happy. I will not pain you nor myself by referring to what has passed, but I conjure you to reflect upon the matter, and do not consign a loving heart like hers to the misery of a disappointed affection."

"It is too early yet," he replied, gently. "Let me have time to recover, and I promise you that the words you have spoken to me, in all kindness and affection, will have their due weight."

She was satisfied, when he took his leave, that the desire of her heart would be fulfilled.

Basil and Emily came in with the flush of health on their cheeks and a light of love beaming in their eyes.

"Mrs. St. Quentin," he said, "pardon my presumption in aspiring to the hand of Emily, but love must plead my excuse. Will you give your consent to her becoming my wife?"

"You are both young," she said, "and have seen very little of the world. Perhaps you have not rightly gauged your own feelings. Early engagements are imprudent. I do not say this unkindly, Basil, for already I love you as a son. But you must go out into the world," she continued, after a pause, "and, as a man, meet its allurements and temptations. If at the end of two years you come to me and ask the same question with a heart unchanged, and should dear Emily wish it, I will gladly say yes."

"I am satisfied," he said. "When hearts love as ours do, time is of no account. To win her hand I would serve not two, but ten years."

"You are a noble youth, and I approve of Emily's choice. Let love spur you on to make a name for yourself. Be courageous, and battle to the front. Let not pleasure or unworthy ambition tempt you aside from the path of duty, or you will wreck not only your own life, but hers also."

These words sunk deep into his heart and spurred him on to redoubled efforts to make the most of his time. The weeks passed, and Clarice was looking forward to the return of her husband.

In her melancholy moods nothing pleased her better than to wander alone on the seashore listening to the hush of the waves, which soothed her mind. One day she wandered further away than was her wont. Not a creature was in sight, and far out at sea the smoke of a steamer or the white sails of a ship bounded the horizon, while sea-gulls screamed overhead. Suddenly Greville appeared before her. She did not scream, or move, or betray any signs of fear.

"So I have found you alone at last!" he said, huskily; and there was a threatening ring in his voice that startled her.

"Well," she said, "what of that? Am I not as safe here as elsewhere? I do not fear you now, but loathe and despise you!"

"I will have my revenge, my fine lady!" he cried. "I swear, before Heaven, that you will not quit this spot alive except as mine! If I cannot possess you, no one else shall!"

He advanced toward her, when, snatching a revolver from her bosom, she said, sternly, "Keep off! Think you I have forgotten to take precautions against your violence? A man, or at least the semblance of one, who could be guilty of such cowardly conduct as yours against a defenseless woman, would even stoop to commit murder. Keep off, I say; I fear not death!"

With a cry of derision, he rushed at her. She fired, and wounded him in the shoulder. He was grappling with her now, dragging her with all his strength toward the cliffs.

She struggled and resisted with all her strength, shrieking at intervals for help, but her voice was lost upon the empty air.

"You cannot escape me now!" he cried, savagely. "You shall die clasped in my arms! You have made life worthless to me! Ah, ha! even in death I will possess you!"

One loud, despairing scream, and there came an answering shout. A traveler, wending his way by the beach toward the town, heard the piteous screams, and rushing forward, seized Greville, and swung him backward, freeing Clarice from his murderous grasp.

"Greville!"

"St. Quentin!"

These words came simultaneously from both. Clarice had fainted, and lay white and motionless on the sands.

"My wife!—you have killed her!" said St. Quentin.

"You shall join her!" was the savage reply, as the scoundrel grappled with him.

It was a fight of Titans, but Greville was mad, frenzied, and endowed with superhuman strength. With his hand clutching his victim's throat, he forced him slowly backward, and both fell from the cliff with a loud splash, never to rise again.

Cyril and Colonel Barnett, who had missed Clarice, and become alarmed at her absence, arrived just in time to see the close of the tragedy. An hour later, both bodies were recovered, and Clarice lay dangerously ill, her life being despaired of.

Six months had passed, and the scene has changed to Colonel Barnett's mansion in New York. Clarice is there, looking pale but lovely in her deep mourning. Kate is bidding her good-by, as she is about to return to her own home.

Lord Sherbrooke enters, and seeing Kate, said, "I have received your letter of farewell, but I cannot let you go."

"My lord," she said, with a heightened color, "I—"

"Listen to me, Kate, my darling—I love you! Will you stay and be my wife?"

He read assent in her lovely eyes, and clasping her to his heart, showered kisses on her brow and lips.

Clarice rose softly, and glided from the room, her heart full of joy at the scene she had just witnessed, leaving the lovers to enjoy their rapture undisturbed.

It is evening, and Clarice sits in the gloaming, thinking of Harry Sinclair, and wondering whether he will come to her.

She is free now, and can love him without fear or shame.

The door opens noiselessly; the figure of a man glides toward her with outstretched arms as he murmurs, "Clarice, my love, my own, I am here!"

With a glad cry, she is clasped in his strong arms and pressed to his heart.

"United at last!" she murmurs. "Never more to part, dear one!"

We must draw a veil over what followed.

The meeting of two loving hearts so long parted is of a kind with which the "stranger intermeddled not."

Five years have passed, and Bob Hartford is in New York once more. He has returned a wealthy man, prosperity having showered its favors upon him.

Colonel Barnett received him with great cordiality and affection.

"You are surprised, no doubt, to see me return so soon, Colonel Barnett," he said. "I am here to ask you a great favor."

"Which I shall be happy to grant if in my power."

Muriel entered at this moment, and, blushing deeply, was about to retire, when Bob detained her, and leading her up to her father, said: "The favor I have to ask is this dear hand."

"Muriel, do you love him?" the colonel asked, in astonishment.

"Yes," she said, coyly.

The colonel laughed and said: "So, so!—this explains why so many letters came to and fro, you sly young puss! But what will your mother say to this?"

Mrs. Barnett entered, and answered for herself.

"I know all, and wish our darling to be happy with the man of her choice."

"So do I," replied the colonel, as he placed his daughter's hand in Bob's. "Take her, and be happy! You have won your way nobly to the front, and I am proud to own you as a son."

A double event came off at Grace Church one perfect day. Basil and Emily and Bob and Muriel were united in the bonds of holy wedlock.

Clarice—now Mrs. Sinclair—and her husband are present; also honest old Jasper Hartford, brave in his festive suit, on which large gilt buttons figure conspicuously, and a loud-pattern silk handkerchief projects prominently from his breast-pocket.

At the conclusion of the ceremony both the lovely brides kissed him tenderly and lovingly.

With tears in his eyes, which were raised heavenward, he murmured, "Oh, God, I thank thee for the gift of two dear daughters, and for making me such a happy man in my old age!"

Clarice clasped her hand in his, and said: "I cannot be sufficiently grateful for the tender care you bestowed on our darling Emily!"

"I wish my old wife were present to share our happiness; but perhaps she is looking down upon us now, and joining in our song of praise."

Clarice was supremely happy. She was now her better self.

THE END.

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